

# **Exploring Female Empowerment in Cañar**

**Narratives of Indigenous Women in Andean  
Ecuador**

by

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## ABSTRACT

The notion of empowerment has become a Western ‘buzzword’ within the development lexicon over recent decades, especially in relation to improving the socioeconomic and political status of women in the developing world. By exploring narratives of Cañari indigenous women in the Ecuadorian Andes, this thesis considers the meaning of empowerment, as evolved and theorised by the West, in relation to an indigenous context. It employs an exploratory, interpretivist and phenomenological approach to understanding the everyday lived experience of individuals and how they engage with the world around them. It seeks to understand the processes that indigenous women might go through in order to become empowered, considers any potential factors that might influence processes of empowerment for indigenous women, in addition to observing the possible outcomes of empowerment in both their individual lives and for the wider community. It draws attention to the idea of collective empowerment, or *power with*, as a dominant feature of empowerment in Cañari women’s lives, reflecting the significance of both the family and community in indigenous culture. Focusing on the individualism that pervades Western notions of empowerment does not always fit the meaning of empowerment in non-Western societies. This thesis seeks to demonstrate how.

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## Acronyms and Abbreviations

APN	Ayuda Popular Noruega
CEDEI	Centre for Inter-American Studies
CEPLAES	Centro de Planificación y Estudios Sociales
CESA	Central Ecuatoriana de Servicios Agrícolas
CIEI	Indigenous Education Research Centre
CONAIE	La Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador
CONFENIAE	Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas de la Amazonia Ecuatoriana
CONMIE	Consejo Nacional de Mujeres Indígenas del Ecuador
CONAMU	National Women's Council (Consejo Nacional de las Mueres)
DINEIB	Dirección Nacional de Educación Intercultural Bilingüe
EAP	Economically Active Population
ECUARUNARI	Confederación de Pueblos de la Nacionalidad Kichuwa del Ecuador
EIB	Intercultural Bilingual Education
ERP	Escuelas Radiofónicas Populares de Riobamba
ERPE	Escuelas Radiofónicas Populares del Ecuador
FEINE	Consejos de Pueblos y Organizaciones Indígenas Evangélicas del Ecuador
FUNDAGRO	Fundación para el Desarrollo Agropecuario
GAD	Gender and Development
GNP	Gross National Product
GPA	Provincial Government of Azuay (Gobierno Provincial Del Azuay)
ILO	International Labour Organisation
ILV	Instituto Lingüístico de Verano
IERAC	Ecuadorian Agrarian Reform and Colonization Institute (Instituto Ecuatoriano de Reforma Agraria y Colonización)
MAE	Misión Andina en el Ecuador
MDG	Millenium Development Goals
MOSEIB	Intercultural Bilingual Education System Model (Modelo Educativo del Sistema de Educación Intercultural Bilingüe)
NFE	Non-Formal Education
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development
ONA	National Literacy Office
PEBI	Intercultural Bilingual Education Project
PUCE	Pontifical Catholic University of Ecuador
SAP	Social Adjustment Programme
SWB	Subjective Well-Being
TUCAYTA	La Tukuy Cañar Ayllukunapa Tantanakuy
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
UPCCC	Unión De Pueblos Y Comunas Campesinas Cañaris
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WID	Women-in-Development

## Glossary of Frequently Used Spanish Terms

<i>Adueñarse de algo</i>	to possess or take control of something
<i>Apoyo</i>	Support
<i>Arrimado(s)</i>	Free indigenous hacienda labourers
<i>Artesanía</i>	Arts and crafts
<i>Ayllu</i>	Community
<i>Bachillerato</i>	College diploma
<i>Compañero/a(s)</i>	Friends/Colleagues
<i>Cantón(es)</i>	County(ies)
<i>Capacitación</i>	Training
<i>Casa Comunales</i>	Community House
<i>Celos</i>	Jealousy
<i>Comuna</i>	Community
<i>Concertaje</i>	Indentured service
<i>Concierto(s)</i>	Labourer
<i>Conocimiento</i>	Knowledge
<i>Coyote(s)</i>	Person(s) who smuggles people across the US border
<i>Cuencano</i>	A man from Cuenca
<i>Empoderamiento</i>	Empowerment
<i>Fiscomisional</i>	Church - State
<i>Hacendado(s)</i>	Hacienda Owner/Administrator
<i>Huasi</i>	Quichua for “house”
<i>Huasipungo</i>	Parcel of land on hacienda given to indigenous people in exchange for labour
<i>Huasipunguero(s)</i>	Intermediate <i>peón</i> status on the hacienda
<i>Jaway</i>	Cañari harvest song
<i>Junta Vocal(es)</i>	Committee spokesperson
<i>Machismo</i>	Male superiority
<i>Madre</i>	Mother
<i>Mayoral</i>	Hacienda Administrator
<i>Mestizo/a</i>	Person of both Spanish and indigenous descent
<i>Minga(s)</i>	Quichua for community working party
<i>Minifundistas</i>	Agricultural smallholdings
<i>Mita</i>	Labour system
<i>Mitayo(s)</i>	Labourer
<i>Mote</i>	Boiled maize
<i>Municipio</i>	Municipality
<i>Parroquia(s)</i>	Parishes
<i>Patrón(es)</i>	Hacienda Boss
<i>Peón(es)</i>	Hacienda worker
<i>Poder</i>	Power
<i>Pollera(s)</i>	Traditional indigenous skirt
<i>Pungo</i>	Quichua for “door”
<i>Semipresencial</i>	Blended learning
<i>Sombrero</i>	Hat
<i>Trago</i>	Liquor
<i>Yanapero(s)</i>	“Helpers” on the hacienda



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# Chapter I

## Introduction

The preservation of ethnic identity, cultural patterns, and the ancestral territories of Andean indigenous communities is significant to the nations of the central Andes today. As the ‘non-dominant sectors of society’ (Cobo, 1983: 50), indigenous people predominantly hold the lowest status on the social scale; ‘The whiter a person is, the more likely that she or he is to be found in the upper echelons of society’ (Bronstein, 1982: 16). Racial differences in Latin America have been a key social issue since the beginning of the colonial period, particularly as ‘the Spaniards believed they were inherently superior to the natives’ (Burkholder and Johnson, 2004: 45). After the Spanish-American republics achieved political independence from Spain in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, ‘Indians remained... at the bottom of the heap, where they had been since the European conquest’ (Stavenhagen, 2002: 24). Besides encountering forced labour and a loss of land after Independence, the cultural and social identity of indigenous people was not recognised as part of national society either. The ruling elites of all newly independent Latin American nations ‘based the projects of their national societies on their self-perception as a Western, Catholic, racially European people’ (Stavenhagen, 2002: 26). Non-Europeans were therefore clearly excluded from development, as they were considered a ‘burdensome obstacle to nation building’ (2002: 26). Nevertheless, today the resistance of indigenous people in the central Andes towards western notions of territory, government, and institutions contributes to the real “essence” of Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia. Since the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Latin America has witnessed an increased presence of indigenous social movements, revolutions, and reforms. In 2008, the small country of Ecuador was identified as having the strongest indigenous movement in Latin America (Picq, 2008). Demands for the recognition of multiculturalism and multilingualism of multi-ethnic groups by indigenous people across the continent, and particularly in the Andes, have resulted in many constitutional amendments and state reforms that now acknowledge indigenous citizenship, culture and autonomy (Plant, 2002: 24-25).

In the early 1980s, Audrey Bronstein visited Latin America to capture the voices of rural women about ‘the nature and context of the situation in which they lived, their role within the family, and the economic process and the social and

political structures' that surrounded them (1982: 11). They were considered to carry a 'triple struggle': 'as citizens of underdeveloped countries; as peasants, living in the most impoverished and disadvantaged areas of those countries; and as women, in male-dominated societies' (1982: 11). There is a frequent statement by scholars and development practitioners that women are subordinated to men, particularly in developing nations. This is substantiated by literature that has studied the processes that lead to women's subordination, which results in gender inequalities at a household, community, and national level and discrepancies in the levels of power between men and women, thus affecting women's socioeconomic and political status (Acosta-Belén & Bose, 1990; Deshmukh-Ranadive, 2005; Leacock, 1977; Safa, 1995). In the context of rural agricultural areas, such as those in Latin America, much of this discourse has been associated with debates concerning the gendered division of labour, decision-making, and the role of women and men within both the public and private arenas of agricultural life (Boserup, 1970, 1989; Deere 1982; Deere and León, 1981; 1982; Jacoby, 1992; Mackintosh, 1984).

One of the arguments pervading development discourse – being that women are unequal to men in the developing world - has led to theories of empowerment. Prior to 1970 the enterprise of development that grew within 'Northern' states following World War II had focused on aiding the socioeconomic situation of men in the developing world. Thus, the needs of women and the barriers hindering women's full participation in social, economic and political spheres, had been sidelined. When Esther Boserup produced an influential piece of research in 1970 that highlighted the role and contribution of Third World women in economic productivity, development practitioners along with academics began to focus on women in underdeveloped countries. As Chapter II of this thesis explains, it was out of this revised focus on women in development that the concept of women's 'empowerment' came about – an approach which seeks to redistribute power within and between societies, to challenge and break down the structures that place women in socioeconomic and politically subordinate positions. As Chapter II further outlines, there are a number of theoretical frameworks that are associated with the notion of empowerment, which have been used to address the data in this thesis. These theories place the individual and the acquisition of 'power' at its centre, and are concerned with the processes that individuals go through to acquire 'power' in

order to create positive changes in their lives from a social, economic and political perspective, besides generating psychological well-being. In this thesis, it is the processes that occur within the lives of indigenous women in the Ecuadorian Andes that can lead to empowerment that are of focus.

Through an exploratory study, with an interpretivist and phenomenological approach, my fieldwork in the highland province of Cañar in Ecuador reveals many indigenous women employed in professional roles, usually as a consequence of university education, and holding community leadership positions. Leadership is observed on several levels; locally, regionally, nationally or internationally. Historically, indigenous women in Ecuador had little or no access to education; Cañar was one of the three provinces with the highest illiteracy rate in the 2010 census. Thus the fact that increasing numbers of indigenous women in Cañar are becoming university level educated professionals is significant. Likewise, indigenous women undertaking political roles within the community or further afield was not previously common, yet women in Cañar are now doing so. Within the literature on empowerment, developing leadership qualities and becoming a leader can be an indicator of empowerment. Nonetheless, in order to achieve leadership and professionalisation, a set of processes have to occur first.

For example, the initial decision to go to university is part of the process towards achieving a higher education. Yet that decision-making might also require the individual to feel capable of assuming such a task in the first place. If they already feel capable, this could indicate a level of psychological power previously established in order to help them act. Psychological power can be associated with the notion of *power within*, while action can be linked to the idea of *power to* (see Chapter II, 2.2: 20-24). If an individual does not feel capable, they might require the encouragement of others first. This could be sought from family and friends, seen as social networks providing a resource or ‘pre-condition’ for a process of empowerment to begin. At the same time, there could be an external factor that helps enable the motivation in the person to go to university, such as parental support. If this were to be financial support, it could be classed as economic power, or *power to*. On the other hand, access to primary and secondary education acts as a precursory resource to university, thus the presence of, and access to, schools and colleges is required first. In the case of Cañar, as Chapter IV demonstrates, the

access to formal education for indigenous people at lower educational levels became much easier from the 1980s onwards, as a consequence of the development of intercultural bilingual education (EIB) in Ecuador. With this in mind, the thesis explores the following research questions:

*What processes have Cañari women gone through in order to acquire 'empowered' positions?*

*Are there any significant factors that influence processes of 'empowerment' for women in Cañar?*

*What has been the outcome of Cañari women's 'empowerment' for themselves as individuals, and for their communities?*

In order to answer these questions, the thesis is laid out as follows. In addition to the matters referred to above, Chapter II provides a discussion of theoretical frameworks existent in the literature that can be used for analysing processes and outcomes of empowerment through education and public engagement. This chapter also considers the notions of social capital and human capabilities and how they can be used to analyse female empowerment. Thereafter, Chapter III presents the methodology that was utilised to carry out this research, paying particular attention to the challenges and 'messiness' of conducting cross-cultural fieldwork. It outlines how I was required to be flexible throughout the data collection process.

Moving on to data analysis, Chapter IV presents a discussion of the hacienda period in Cañar and an examination of the agrarian reform process and the consciousness-raising that occurred amongst the Cañari that aided in the redistribution of land in the late 1960s and 1970s. Within this analysis, the status of Cañari women is reflected upon, in addition to the role of external agents. The longer-term outcomes of agrarian reform are subsequently considered in the chapter, paying attention to the impact of reform on women's lives and the new opportunities that arose for them as a consequence. Equally, this part of the chapter briefly considers the issue of external migration and its impact on households and Cañari women's lives. The subject of migration is a significant matter in Cañar, one that has been addressed in-depth by others elsewhere (Jokisch, 2002; Kyle, 2000; Pribilsky, 2007). Thus it is not the purpose of this section to provide a lengthy analysis. Nonetheless, it is important to make note of, as it will be seen in the subsequent chapters that the issue of migration has played a role in the lives of the

women that are documented herein. Finally, the latter part of this chapter explains the development of EIB in Cañar and considers how a generational shift in attitude towards women accessing education has occurred amongst the Cañari. Thus, Chapter IV provides a contextual background to the proceeding analysis made in Chapters V and VI.

Chapter V focuses on the educational achievement of several participants in obtaining a university degree. It presents participant narratives as mini case-studies in order to examine the process involved in attending university, particularly from personal and familial perspectives, while also noting factors that helped to facilitate their education. The outcomes that their university experiences have had, both on them as individuals and for the wider community, are also reflected on. In Chapter VI, a similar approach is taken to the data, using participant narratives to tell the stories of women and their processes in engaging in public spaces and becoming leaders. The factors facilitating this are explored, in addition to the outcomes that their leadership has had for both themselves and the wider community. This chapter also discusses a specific programme of non-formal education that has enabled women to advance their leadership skills. Equally, this chapter reflects on some of the tensions indigenous women face as leaders within the indigenous movement.

Finally, this thesis considers the following question:

*To what extent do women who may be considered 'empowered' by the developed world challenge the appropriateness of a western concept of empowerment for indigenous women?*

The reason for asking this question is because the bases of a lot of aspects of indigenous culture are solidarity and reciprocity amongst a collectivity; usually the community. As will be seen in Chapters IV, V and VI, the data highlights the significance of family and community within Cañari culture, and therefore both these social entities are important within Cañari women's lives. Given that empowerment is principally understood as an individual acquiring power (Zapata, 1999b), it is worthwhile considering what meaning the notion of empowerment holds for women, especially for those who come from a cultural background that holds different ways of experiencing the world than the Western one.

The overall aim of this research has been to explore empowerment through

the words of indigenous women in Ecuador. The research has also aimed to respond to several assertions made by academics, principally Lynne Phillips and Srilatha Batliwala. In 1990, Phillips noted that future research was required that considered 'how rural women themselves construct their experience as Latin Americans' (1990: 101). Seventeen years later, Batliwala claimed that:

...we need to build a new language in which to frame ... strategies for social transformation at the local, national, or global level... by listening to poor women and their movements, listening to their values, principles, articulations, and actions, and by trying to hear how they frame their search for justice (2007: 564).

By listening to Cañari women articulate the stories of their lives, and by providing central elements of their narratives here, it is possible to observe what they consider important in their search for development and progress. In doing so, the knowledge gained here allows for an assessment of Western empowerment discourse and its relevance within non-Western cultures. Further, this study adds to the literature already established concerning processes of empowerment. I am also contributing to other scholarly work concerning Andean women. For example, as noted above, many studies in the past have addressed the topic of gender relations within agricultural units and communities in various parts of the Andes, focusing specifically on the agricultural aspect of life.<sup>1</sup> Others have considered the specific role of Andean women in the market place and waged labour (Babb, 1989; Radcliffe, 1990; Seligmann, 2004). More recent enquiries have focused on Andean women and begging in urban conurbations as a means to subsist (Swanson, 2010). In this study, I add data to this field, through an in-depth exploration of indigenous women's experiences as university students, professionals and indigenous leaders. This thesis therefore does not dwell on the household and agricultural side of Cañari life, but more so on the public one.

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<sup>1</sup> For example, see: Babb (1985), Bourque and Warren, (1991), Deere (1977), De La Cadena (1995), Harris (1978; 2000), Hamilton (1998), Núñez del Prado Bajar (1975) and Poeschel (1988).





## Chapter II

# Discourses of Development and Female Empowerment

In order to address the topic of female empowerment in the lives of Cañari women in this thesis, it is necessary to provide a theoretical backdrop to the concept of empowerment first. In this chapter, section 2.1 provides an explanation of the origins and evolution of the empowerment model within development discourse and policy, with specific focus paid to women. This section is important as it highlights how the notion has come to be so prominent within the arena of third world development, particularly when working with women. In turn, section 2.2 dissects the concept of empowerment and considers scholarly definitions, before briefly addressing the subject of ‘power’ as the root to processes of empowerment. The four “powers” of empowerment - *power over*, *power within*, *power to* and *power with* - are subsequently addressed in this section, as it is believed that through these “powers” processes of empowerment can occur. This latter point is elaborated on in the remainder of the chapter sections, all of which consider several different frameworks that exist within the literature that connect with empowerment processes. Given the prevalent topic of education within the data, particularly non-formal and formal education, these two educational modes and their links to generating female empowerment are outlined in sections 2.3 and 2.4. Thereafter, in order to consider processes of empowerment in the data via women’s public engagement, political empowerment and leadership are addressed in section 2.5. Lastly, section 2.6 reviews the concept of social capital and human capabilities. Social capital is considered an avenue for acquiring resources that act as ‘pre-conditions’ in empowerment processes for women. Correspondingly, by adding the notion of agency and decision-making alongside resources, the framework of human capabilities comes into play in addressing the ability to create outcomes of empowerment.

## ***2.1 Women, Gender and Empowerment in Development***

Development discourse and theory originally arose in the post-World War II period, as a consequence of high levels of poverty on a global scale (Escobar, 2004: 79-82). The enterprise of “development” in the 1940s considered the transfer of Northern knowledge to Southern states as a noble and straightforward venture, yet with a top-down approach (Parpart et al., 2002: 8). The key components to formulating development theory included: capital formation; education and the ‘need to foster modern cultural values’; and the requirement to ‘create adequate institutions for carrying out the complex task ahead’ – international organisations were considered the appropriate institutions to deliver the necessary aid (Escobar, 2004: 82- 83).<sup>2</sup> In practice, as Acosta-Belén and Bose suggest:

*Development* is an all-encompassing word used to summarize the overriding concerns and aspirations of advanced capitalist nations and their international agencies in undertaking initiatives and generating responses to a whole range of critical problems faced by what they categorized as the poor, “underdeveloped” countries of the world (1995: 17).

Prior to the mid-1980s, when thereafter economic restructuring and structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) swept continents such as Africa and Latin America (Stromquist, 1999), policies built upon the notion of Western development were based on the idea that the world was divided into the First World, Second World and the Third World. The First was considered those countries with an advanced, developed capitalist industrial system, whilst the Second referred to the contrasting socialist states. The Third concerned the poorer, “traditional”, agricultural nations of Africa, Asia and Latin America (Acosta-Belén and Bose, 1995: 17). The hemispheric division of “North” and “South” thus divided the First and Third Worlds, and it was claimed that ‘Western societies represent[ed] the ideal form of cultural, socioeconomic, and political development for Third World countries to emulate if they [were] to achieve progress, prosperity, and democracy’ (Acosta-Belén and Bose, 1990: 302).

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<sup>2</sup>Capital formation included technology and industrialisation, monetary and fiscal policies, population and resources, agricultural development, besides trade and commerce. International institutional organisation that grew out of development theory during the mid-1940s include the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, and the majority of the United Nations technical departments (Escobar, 2004).

Radcliffe and Laurie (2006: 233) outline how modernisation theories of development during the 1950s and 60s were based upon a premise that “traditional” practices of people in Third World countries needed to change, so that people would think, live and act according to modern, Western culture; ‘Non-Western – ‘traditional’ – cultures were perceived as fading relics that would inevitably and unproblematically be replaced by modern cultures and identities’ (2006: 233). However, by the 1970s, Northern development projects had failed to provide positive assistance to the South. Scholars consequently argued that Northern capitalist nations had deliberately marginalised the South, with the intention of creating dependency ‘to ensure a source of raw materials and markets for their manufactured goods’ (Parpart et al., 2002: 8). Thus, a transformation of the world system was required which focused upon self-reliance. Consequently, scholars such as Friedman (1994) called for an alternative form of development, which was centred on people rather than profits. Yet, by the 2000s, critics continued to argue that Northern development initiatives had silenced the knowledge and voices of those in marginalised groups across the globe (Parpart et al., 2002). Mies et al. had noted that wealth would not exist without poverty, development would not exist without underdevelopment, and the high domain and power of men would ‘not exist without the subjection and submissiveness of women’ (1988: 3).

During the immediate post-war period, ‘women were invisible. As wives and mothers they were the passive recipients of welfare policies’ (Heward, 1999: 1). The central reproductive role of women meant that the sexual division of labour within the home associated women with domestic work, whilst men specialised in full-time production for the market and economic development (Kabeer, 1994: 17). Thus women were observed to be indiscernible participants in the advancement of developing countries. It was not until 1970, when Ester Boserup produced a seminal piece of work called *Women’s Role in Economic Development*, that the attention given to women in the developing world increased.

### ***Ester Boserup and WID Discourse***

Boserup’s study highlighted the level of contribution made by women to the productive spheres of agriculture, industrialisation, and modernisation in Asia, Africa, and Latin America for the first time. She stated that ‘with the modernization

of agriculture and with migration to the town, a new sex pattern of productive work must emerge, for better or worse' (Boserup, 1989: 5). As a result of her study, development donor agencies were alerted to the fact that resources had been previously misallocated, which had resulted in women and their role as key agents in national economies to go unrecognised (Mitter, 1989: 1). Thus, as Kabeer suggests, Boserup 'condemned the tendency of planners to see women as "secondary" earners and to train them to be efficient housewives rather than seeking to improve their professional ability to compete equally with men in the marketplace' (1994: 21). Further, Hamilton et al. note that:

... state and donor-funded programs designed to increase commercial output in the smallholding sector channelled technology, credit, and marketing assistance to men, while women's programs focused on home-making and supplemental income-earning activities (2001: 1).

Other programmes orientated towards women were centred on reproductive issues such as nutrition and childcare, or improving women's fertility (Karl, 1995: 94). Therefore, it is apparent that programmes did not consider women's productive role in agriculture or other means of production.

In response to Boserup's work, the United Nation's Decade for Women occurred between 1975 and 1985.<sup>3</sup> It was during this time that debates appeared concerning Women-in-Development (WID). The WID discourse stressed the importance of integrating women as active and equal participants in productive work. According to Moser (1993), the WID approach, used throughout the 1970s and 80s by development agencies, entailed three different policy approaches/frameworks – equity, anti-poverty, and efficiency. Within these frameworks, the concept of practical and strategic gender needs, as developed by Molyneux (1985), was used in order to examine how such approaches could meet the needs of women. The practical gender needs corresponded with 'what women require in order to fulfill their roles and tasks', whereas strategic gender needs referred to 'what women require in order to overcome their subordination' (Karl, 1995: 97)

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<sup>3</sup> It is said that when the United Nation's proclaimed it's International Women's Year in 1975, data was released that showed two-thirds of the world's work being carried out by women, yet only ten per cent were receiving an income and only one per cent owned means of production (Acosta-Belén & Bose, 1995: 20).

The equity approach was part of the original WID agenda (Moser, 1993: 62), and was concerned with integrating women into waged work, thus emphasising women's economic independence, besides considering inequality between women and men in the family and marketplace.<sup>4</sup> The approach saw women as 'active participants in development'; recognised their 'triple role'; sought to meet the strategic gender needs of women through 'direct state intervention, giving political and economic autonomy to women; and challenged 'women's subordinate position' (Moser, 1993: 62). However, it was abandoned when aid agencies and governments considered equity programmes to impose 'unacceptable interference with...countr[ies] traditions' (Moser, 1993: 65).

Consequently, development programmes replaced the equity approach with one that focused predominantly on practical gender needs (Karl, 1995: 97); the anti-poverty approach. This framework differed from that of equity due to the fact that it linked women's economic inequality with poverty instead of female subordination. Emphasis shifted from 'reducing inequality between men and women, to reducing income inequality' (Moser, 1993: 67). It targeted low-income women - the "poorest-of-the-poor" (Chant, 2007: 2) - for generating economic activity, particularly in the form of small-enterprise projects (Karl, 1995: 100). The anti-poverty policy focused on the productive role of women because it was believed that increasing the productivity of women in low-income households was necessary for 'poverty alleviation and the promotion of balanced economic growth' (Moser, 1993: 67). Ultimately, there was an underlying assumption to this approach, which considered that the 'origins of women's poverty and inequality with men [were] attributable to their lack of access to private ownership of land and capital, and to sexual discrimination in the labour market' (1993: 69). Yet experience showed that, whilst projects aimed at generating women's income may have provided employment for women to fulfill their practical gender needs, the anti-poverty approach did not necessarily give women greater autonomy to meet their strategic gender needs. Further, this approach ignored women's reproductive role and consequently extended working days and increased women's triple burden (Moser, 1993: 69). As Moser concluded: 'unless an income-generating project also alleviates the burden of

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<sup>4</sup> The equity approach endeavoured to fulfil the practical gender need for income alongside the strategic gender need for equality with men.

women's domestic labour and child care... it may fail even to meet [the] practical gender need to earn an income' (1993: 69).

Therefore, as an attempt to overcome this problem, the efficiency approach, which materialised in the late 1980s during the aftermath of the debt crisis, aimed to 'ensure that development [was] more efficient and effective through women's economic contribution. Women's participation [was] equated with equity for women' (Moser, 1993: 69). The efficiency approach presupposed that women are an 'under-used labour force which can be exploited at low cost' in addition to deeming women's time as 'elastic' and something that can be stretched in order to incorporate work that falls upon women due to a decline in social services (Karl, 1995: 100). Emphasis was transferred from women towards development, 'on the assumption that increased economic participation for Third World women is automatically linked with increased equity' (Moser, 1993: 70). As such, "Efficiency" decisively became the key buzzword within WID discourse, in the hope that development planners would incorporate women into policies and projects. The projects that did appear focused specifically on traditional craft making, and providing women credit to build up a small business for income generation; 'the theory was that women's poverty resulted from their underdevelopment, and all that was required for development to occur was to increase their productivity through provision of credit' (Hunt, 2004: 246).

However, the WID approach received a substantial amount of criticism. It was accused of ignoring the underlying reasons as to why female subordination existed in the first place (Luttrell et al., 2007: 3), and was considered a 'technical fix' rather than a matter of transforming development and "empowering" women (Hunt, 2004: 246). Heward suggests that WID emphasised 'what women did for development, rather than what it did for them' (1999: 1). It was found that 'women had been integrated into development, but in such a way as to perpetuate inequality and their own subordination' (Mies, 1986 cited in Hunt, 2004: 247). A conceptual shift occurred in the discourse in order to rectify these criticisms, predominantly influenced by academic research (Moser, 1993: 2).

### ***GAD and Empowerment vs. WID***

Attention was taken away from solely focusing upon women, to analysing the relations between men and women and the inequality present between them at every level; from the micro to the macro. Thus, development organisations exchanged their WID policies for principles guided by the Gender and Development (GAD) approach (Hunt, 2004: 248). The shift in focusing upon gender rather than women occurred due to the fact that scholars were concerned with the way in which women's "problems" were associated with their *sex* instead of their *gender* (Moser, 1993: 3). The GAD framework helped to analyse the interaction between men and women's roles in developing societies, and aimed to address the structures and dynamics of gender relations (Troutner and Smith, 2004: 7).

Gender is argued to be a socially constructed phenomenon (Moser, 1993: 3). The notion of male and female 'genders' contrasts significantly with the biologically determined 'sex' of men and women. Whereas sociologists refer to 'sex' as the anatomic and physiological differences between the bodies of male and female, 'gender' is more concerned with the psychological, social, and cultural differences that exist between men and women. Likewise, 'gender' looks at the socially constructed concepts of masculinity and femininity (Giddens, 2001). In the context of Latin America, where patriarchal political systems and male domination has existed since the colonial period, many feminists have argued that a 'sexual hierarchy' has been facilitated (Cobo, 2000: 60), in which 'women...[have] been appropriated, controlled, and placed in subordinate positions of dependency by those who control the means of production and dominate access to capital' (Acosta-Belén & Bose, 1995: 16). As Safa states, men have continually been designated as the primary breadwinners, whilst 'women are charged with primary responsibility for domestic chores and childcare' (1995: 45). This gendered division between the productive and reproductive spheres of everyday life, in which the man is the "mythical" breadwinner, is argued to have been 'preserved by public forms of patriarchy embedded in the state and the workplace, which continue to profit from women's subordination' (1995: 48).

Thus the GAD approach was concerned with tackling these socially constructed notions of gender roles and relations between men and women, in addition to highlighting the value systems that appeared to lead to the sexual division



of labour (Rowlands, 1998: 15). By analysing gender, and the diversity of circumstances within both men and women's lives, Rowlands suggests that one is required to 'move away from the simple dichotomies of public/private, formal/informal, urban/rural and production/reproduction' (1998: 15). Equally, 'since gender inequalities touch all aspects of women's lives', it is argued that gender analysis necessitates the consideration of their physical situation, health, sexuality, education, and intra-household relations (1998: 15). Similarly, the GAD approach made 'visible the power relations that exist between men and women in most societies, the situation of subordination that most women face' (1998: 16). Consequently, the concept of women's empowerment became connected to the GAD framework. The idea of 'empowerment' transformed into a new approach towards women and development that:

...questions some of the fundamental assumptions concerning the interrelationship between power and development that underlie previous approaches...It places far less emphasis than the equity approach on increasing women's "status" relative to men, but seeks to empower women through the redistribution of power within, as well as between, societies (Moser, 1989: 1815).

Further, Moser suggests that the empowerment framework also questions an assumption made by the equity approach, in which 'women want to be integrated into the mainstream of Western-designed development, in which they have no choice in defining the kind of society they want' (1989: 1815). Thus, whilst holding 'demands [for] greater power and autonomy for women' at its core (Stromquist, 1994; cited in Stacki and Monkman, 2003: 182), empowerment has become a flourishing buzzword in the development lexicon in more recent years.

## **2.2 The Power of "Female Empowerment"**

The opening statement to the first chapter in the book *Promises of Empowerment* (Smith et al., 2004) declares that 'women's well-being depends on their empowerment' (Troutner & Smith, 2004: 1). It appears a trouble-free, simple, and straightforward assertion. Yet theory and practice have shown that female empowerment can be a complex and controversial concept to discuss, implement, and achieve. Women's empowerment has been at the core of many international

development agencies' projects, policies and reports during the last two decades.<sup>5</sup> This fact is often attributed to the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in September 1995. As all the participating governments present at this conference held the ultimate determination of advancing 'equality, development and peace for all women everywhere in the interest of all humanity' (United Nations, 1996: 2), the *1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action* was generated. As a document, the declaration set an agenda for women's empowerment. The mission statement found within it set out strategies for the advancement of women, with the eventual goal of: 'removing all the obstacles to women's active participation in all spheres of public and private life through a full and equal share in economic, social, cultural and political decision-making' (1996: 7). In doing so, it stated that the 'principle of shared power and responsibility should be established between women and men at home, in the workplace and in the wider national and international communities' (1996: 7). In order for the *Platform for Action* to achieve success, it asserted that all Governments, international organisations, and institutions at all levels needed to commit to the declaration and its mission statement. Consequently, the full realisation of human rights and fundamental freedom of all women could be attained (1996: 8).

The debate within scholarly literature concerning empowerment from a theoretical perspective has evidently been a dynamic one. Both advocates and critics of the concept in development have acknowledged that the use of the word is ill-defined (Cornwall and Brock, 2005; Deere and León, 2001b; Kabeer, 1994; Parpart et al., 2002; Rowlands, 1998). It is also clear that the term embraces various interpretations and meanings dependent upon the context and discipline in which it is used, applied, and discussed (Narayan, 2005).

### ***Defining Empowerment***

From a general perspective, scholars define "empowerment" in a number of ways. For example, Bhaskar considers empowerment as a 'process that enhances the ability of disadvantaged (power less) individuals and groups to challenge and change (in their favor) existing power relationships that place them in subordinate economic, social and political positions' (2008: 85). For Rowlands, empowerment is defined as

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<sup>5</sup> For example, see: World Bank (2013), Pesántez (2010), and Andean Institute (2013).

‘bringing people who are outside the decision-making process into it’, with an emphasis on increasing their access to political structures and economic realms which permit people to access markets and incomes, allowing them to participate in economic decision-making (1997: 13). Others consider it ‘a process of identifying and removing the conditions which cause powerlessness while increasing feelings of self efficacy’ (Koteswara Rao, 2005: 437). On the other hand, empowerment is also associated with “pro-poor growth” or “poverty reduction”, in which the poor and vulnerable gain power in order to overcome inequalities of power that subjugate them within their locality and nation state (Kabeer, 2003; OECD, 2012; Townsend et al., 1999b). Correspondingly, within the arena of international development agencies and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), empowerment has also been viewed as a tool for ‘social transformation’. NGOs and mainstream development agencies have been particularly susceptible to associating empowerment with “participation” since the late 1980s. They have progressively focused on small-scale, poor, and marginalised communities in order to encourage grass-roots and ‘participatory’ initiatives to help alleviate poverty and improve socioeconomic and political well-being (Cornwall & Brock, 2005).<sup>6</sup> Eyben and Napier-Moore highlight that the words ‘choice, decision-making, realising opportunities and potential, knowledge and conscientization, participation, and community action’ are most frequently used by International Development Agencies in relation to discussing empowerment (2008: 17).

### ***Power as the Root***

Parpart et al. question why ‘empowerment seems to fit so many shoes’, and suggest it has to do with ‘the fluidity of the term power’ (2002: 5). It is clear from the above that ‘power’ is a significant element in the notion of empowerment, and is undoubtedly considered as the root to it by academics (Oxaal and Baden, 1997; Rowlands, 1995; Townsend et al., 1999b). Equally, Batliwala notes that the conceptualisation of ‘empowerment’ involves understanding it as a socio-political *process*, and viewing empowerment as ‘shifts in political, social and economic power between and across both individuals and social groups’ (Batliwala, 2007: 559).

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<sup>6</sup> See Table 1 in Ibrahim and Alkire (2007: 380-382) for further definitions and conceptualisations of ‘empowerment’ by academics and non-governmental development organisations.

Troutner & Smith suggest that empowerment can simply be defined as the process of accumulating power (2004: 4), which is reinforced by Eyben and Napier-Moore, who state: ‘the Achilles heel of empowerment is that it implies that you don’t have power. Subordination is built in’ (2008: 17). In relation to women, it is said that power can condition their experience in two ways; it can either be a ‘source of oppression in its abuse and the source of emancipation in its use’ (Radtke & Stam, 1994, cited in Rowlands, 1995a: 21). It is also stated that power has to be understood as functioning at three different levels – the institutional, the household, and the individual (Oxaal & Baden, 1997: 1) - and that the potential for empowerment is linked to the macro, micro and meso levels of society (Deshmukh-Ranadive, 2005: 103). However, power in itself emerges as a complex concept to define.

Csaszar identifies power as a ‘multi-layered’ notion, without a ‘universally accepted definition’, due to the fact that academics disagree over whether power is consensual or conflictual, besides how power is established (2005: 137). It is argued that theorists following the conflictual philosophy - such as Robert Dahl, Peter Bachrach and Morton Baratz, and Steven Lukes - assert that power is ‘something inherently negative and noxious: power prohibits, power makes a person do what he would not have done otherwise, or to act against his interests’ (Csaszar, 2005: 137). Firstly, Dahl argued that:

... power is a relation, and that it is a relation among people... Let us call the objects in this relationship of power, actors. Actors may be individuals, groups, roles, offices, governments, nation-states, or other human aggregates. To specify the actors in a power relation – *A* has power over *B* (1957a: 203).

Taking this simple statement above further, Dahl expands this notion by outlining several components of this power relationship that need to be considered: the source, domain or *base* of *A*’s power over *B*; the *means* or instruments utilised by *A* to exert power over *B*; the *amount* of *A*’s power over *B*; and the *scope* of *A*’s power over *B* (1957a: 203).

**Table 1: Components of a Conflictual Power Relationship**

<b>Components of a Power Relationship</b>	
<i>Base</i>	All the resources (opportunities, acts, objects etc.) that <i>A</i> can use to influence the behavior of <i>B</i> . Often inert and passive, requiring a <i>means</i> to alter <i>B</i> 's behaviour
<i>Means</i>	The method used to alter <i>B</i> 's behaviour. E.g: 'threats or promises to employ the base in some way and they may involve actual use of the base' (Dahl, 1957a: 203). It is a 'mediating activity by <i>A</i> between <i>A</i> 's base and <i>B</i> 's response' (1957a: 203).
<i>Scope</i>	<i>B</i> 's response to <i>A</i> . E.g: Does Congress pass a bill, or kill it?
<i>Amount</i>	Amount of <i>A</i> 's power is often represented by a statement of probability in relation to <i>B</i> 's response. E.g: if <i>A</i> promises <i>X</i> , the chances are 9 out of 10 that <i>B</i> will cooperate.

Source: Dahl (1957a)

Dahl's conception of power relations was notably focused on power in decision-making, particularly decisions within political structures, such as the Supreme Court in the USA (Dahl, 1957b) and municipal government within American cities (Dahl, 1961). Moving Dahl's theory on power forward, however, Bachrach and Baratz argued that there are 'two faces of power' (1962: 947):

Of course power is exercised when A participates in the making of decisions that affect B. But power is also exercised when A devotes his energies to creating or reinforcing social and political values and institutional practices that limit the scope of the political process to public consideration of only those issues which are comparatively innocuous to A. To the extent that A succeeds in doing this, B is prevented, for all practical purposes, from bringing to the fore any issues that might in their resolution be seriously detrimental to A's set of preferences (1962: 948).

Power in this sense becomes about 'agenda setting' (Csaszar, 2005: 138), and necessitates researchers to not only ask "who has power?" but also to 'investigate the particular "mobilization of bias" in the institution under scrutiny' (Bachrach and Baratz, 1962: 952), and address the process of non-decision making. For Bachrach and Baratz, 'mobilization of bias' means:

... a set of predominant values, beliefs, rituals, and institutional procedures ('rules of the game') that operate systematically and consistently to the benefit of certain persons and groups at the expense of others. Those who benefit are placed in a preferred position to defend and promote their vested interests. More often than not, the 'status quo defenders' are a minority or elite group within the population in question (1970: 43).

Lukes (2005) provides another perspective on conflictual power. Lukes regarded the theories of pluralists such as Dahl as ‘one-dimensional’, theories by critics of Dahl such as Bachrach and Baratz as ‘two-dimensional’, while he endeavoured to provide a ‘third dimension’ himself. Analysing Bachrach and Baratz’s theory, Lukes outlines how their concept refers to power as being about control, compliance, coercion, influence, authority, force and manipulation (2005: 21-22), and still relates to an actor’s behaviour within observable conflicts. In turn, Lukes suggests that power can also be exercised by *A* over *B* through determining and shaping their preferences, desires, and interests so as to prevent grievances on the part of *B*. In sum, Lukes defines the concept of power as ‘*A* exercises power over *B* when *A* effects *B* in a manner contrary to *B*’s interests’ (2005: 37).

Overall, these theories have been identified as a zero-sum game, in which one person’s gain is another’s loss (Csaszar, 2005: 137). People can manipulate ‘other people’s goals and desires’. Thus, actor *A* can influence the aspirations of Actor *B*, or preclude *B* from expression of thought (Troutner and Smith, 2004: 3). This overall kind of power and zero-sum affair is referred to as being *power over* (Csaszar, 2005: 144). This form of power can be:

... insidious when it becomes a way of life, a set of values or priorities that control and constrain thoughts...[which is] often invisible, working through everyday activities and traditions, upheld through political, economic, and social institutions (Troutner and Smith, 2004: 3).

### ***The Four “Powers” and Women’s Empowerment***

In relation to women, therefore, it is suggested that, in certain cases, women are prevented from searching for new roles, possibilities and positions. This is due to the fact that ‘notions of biological determinism and the idea that “this is my destiny, my role, my place”’ act as prohibitors to change (Troutner and Smith, 2004: 3). “Power over” is often the type of power that comes to mind when an individual thinks about power, ‘because we only notice something when it’s a problem... [and] “Power over” easily leads to social conflict, and thus becomes the context in which we normally recognize and worry about the phenomenon’ (Hearn, 2012: 6). However, there exist three other forms of power that scholars have discussed widely. They include “*power to*”, “*power with*”, and “*power within*”. Table 2 demonstrates this further.

**Table 2: Four Types of Power**

<b>Four Types of Power</b>	
<i>Power Over</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ability to influence and coerce (Luttrell et al., 2007: 3)</li> <li>- Focused on the exercise of power, rather than the acquisition of power (Troutner and Smith, 2004: 4).</li> <li>- Controlling power, which may be responded to with compliance, resistance or manipulation (Rowlands, 1997: 13)</li> <li>- Power exercised by institutions over individuals; exercised by individuals over others (e.g. women); tyranny exercised over ourselves, originating from a tension between duty and wish (Alberti, 1999: 131)</li> <li>- Power is relational and is about social action (Eyben, 2005: 19)</li> </ul>
<i>Power To</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Organise and change existing hierarchies (Luttrell et al., 2007: 3)</li> <li>- Generative or productive power which creates new possibilities and actions without domination (Rowlands, 1997: 13)</li> <li>- Every person has potential to shape his or her life and world. Expressed by people's ability to recognise their interests and realise they have power to shape their circumstances to achieve a situation that is more favourable to their interests (Csaszar, 2005: 144)</li> <li>- Action; power to build a different future. To become organised, design projects, obtain resources (e.g. money, education), achieve change and value work (Mercado, 1999)</li> <li>- Having decision-making authority, power to solve problems and can be creative and enabling (Oxaal and Baden, 1997: 1)</li> <li>- An actor has the capacity to affect the patterns of outcomes against the wishes of other actors. Is concerned with decision-making on issues where there is observable conflict (Kabeer, 1994: 224)</li> </ul>
<i>Power With</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increased power from collective action (Luttrell et al., 2007: 3)</li> <li>- Working together to tackle a problem; the whole being greater than the sum of the individuals (Rowlands, 1997: 13)</li> <li>- Capacity to achieve with others what one could not achieve alone (Townsend et al., 1999a: 31)</li> <li>- Common ground among different interests and the building of collective strength through organisation and the development of shared values and meanings. Collective action is often a response to powerlessness (Eyben, 2005: 22)</li> <li>- Based on mutual support, solidarity, and collaboration; multiplies talents and knowledge. Can help transform or reduce social conflicts and promote equality between people (Csaszar, 2005: 144)</li> </ul>
<i>Power from</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increased individual consciousness (Luttrell et al., 2007: 3)</li> <li>- Capacity to imagine and have hope, to believe that one is strong enough</li> </ul>

<i>Within</i>	<p>and has the right to change one's circumstances (Csaszar, 2005: 145)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Recognising that one is not helpless, not the source of all one's own problems, that one is restricted in part by structures outside oneself. <i>Power within</i> must be self-generated (Townsend et al., 1999a: 30)</li> <li>- The uniqueness and strength each person has within them that makes them human. Requires self acceptance and self-respect; ultimately leads to respect and acceptance of others (Rowlands, 1997: 13)</li> <li>- Individual's sense of worth and dignity; relates to <i>power with</i> (Eyben, 2005: 22)</li> </ul>
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Csaszar argues that *power to*, *power with* and *power within* fall under what has been called the “‘positive power’” category established by Foucault’ (2005: 144). As a philosopher and historian, Michael Foucault’s thinking and theorising over power is noted to have fallen within three distinct periods (Hearn, 2012: 87-92). The assertion that power was ‘positive’ came about during the 1970s, when Foucault suggested that ‘power works by enabling, by cultivating and channelling abilities; and it does this through forms of knowledge’ (Hearn, 2012: 88). As such, “‘positive power’” is the ‘power to say yes and to produce new realities’ (Csaszar, 2005: 141). For Foucault, positive power is generated when there is a network of relationships between free individuals that can act. He believed power was relational between subjects and could only exist when exercised. He believed power has no ‘essence’, as it is not located anywhere in particular (Csaszar, 2005: 141; Rowlands, 1997: 12), as it ‘permeates society’ (Parpart et al. 2002: 6). Further, Foucault asserted that ‘power creates subjectivity, moulding identities and self-awareness in ways that are productive and not necessarily repressive’ (Hearn, 2012: 88). It is consequently possible to see how Foucauldian theory rests in the latter three forms of power listed above. Equally, it is noted that the feminist movement has connected to Foucault’s thinking over power and has been particularly focused on generating collective action and *power with*, which has in turn developed ideas relating to *power within* (Oxaal and Baden, 1997: 1; Parpart et al., 2002: 8).

In discussions concerning the processes that occur within female empowerment, these four “powers” outlined above play a central role (Luttrell et al., 2007; Mayoux, 1998; Rowlands, 1997; Townsend et al., 1999b). Table 3 represents



some of the meanings scholars have given each type of power within the notion of female empowerment.

**Table 3: Four Powers of Empowerment Processes**

<b>The Function of the Four Powers in Processes of Female Empowerment</b>	
<i>Power Over</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Linked to reducing the obstacles to change at a household and community level (Mayoux, 1998: 238)</li> <li>- Women understanding the dynamics of oppression and internalised oppression so that they can perceive themselves as able and entitled to make decisions. Thus it brings people who are outside the decision making process into it (Rowlands, 1997: 13-14)</li> <li>- Emphasises the need for participation in existing economic and political structures but does not involve changes to those structures (Luttrell et al., 2007: 4)</li> </ul>
<i>Power To</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increases individual women's capacity to create change (Mayoux, 1998: 238)</li> <li>- Is creative and enables women to reconstruct and reinvent themselves; ability to try new things and find pride in abilities (Townsend et al., 1999a: 33-34)</li> <li>- Links with <i>power with</i> and the processes through which women become aware of their own interests and how those relate to the interests of others, in order both to participate from a greater position of strength in decision-making and actually to influence such decisions (Rowlands, 1997: 14)</li> <li>- Links with <i>power within</i> to give scope to the full range of human capabilities and potential (Rowlands, 1997: 14)</li> </ul>
<i>Power With</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Gaining power as a collective, as a process of collective empowerment (Luttrell et al., 2007: 5)</li> <li>- Involvement in political structures or collective action based on co-operation rather than competition. Can be focused at the local level or within national / international institutions (Rowlands, 1997: 15)</li> </ul>
<i>Power from Within</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increases will for change; builds confidence and assertiveness in women; changes their aspirations and consciousness to challenge subordination; increases autonomy and willingness to make decisions concerning themselves and others (Mayoux, 1998: 238)</li> <li>- Links with <i>Power to</i>, in that achieving 'power to' requires an individual to change their own perceptions about their rights, capacities and potential (Luttrell et al., 2007: 5)</li> <li>- The fundamental power on which women must build from in order to respond to the powers over them; namely patriarchy and capitalism. It is self-generated and women need to realise what they are capable of doing (Townsend et al., 1999a: 30)</li> <li>- Entails reflection, analysis and assessment of what has hitherto been taken for granted so as to uncover the socially constructed and socially shared basis of apparently individual problems (Kabeer, 1994: 245)</li> </ul>

Inevitably, these four ‘powers’ often overlap within the processes of empowerment for women. Nevertheless, a number of scholars have provided theoretical frameworks for the analysis of women’s empowerment, which incorporate these four ‘powers’ in various ways. They also link with other approaches within development discourse that can help address elements of inequalities within women’s lives. The following sections outline these various bases to an analysis of women’s lives vis-à-vis empowerment, while also incorporating a discussion on possible avenues that might enable empowerment for women.

### ***2.3 Consciousness-raising to Build Cognitive and Psychological Empowerment***

It is noted that, in order for women who suffer discrimination based on their gender to generate change, they must create a ‘consciousness of gender discrimination’. This involves women changing their ‘negative self-perceptions’, in addition to their understanding of their capabilities and rights (Deere and León, 2001: 25). This process consequently falls into the category of *power within*, or what Stromquist (1995) frames as the ‘cognitive’ and ‘psychological’ components of empowerment. Malthotra and Schuler state that ‘women themselves must be significant actors in the process of change’, thus arguing that women cannot empower themselves by simply being passive recipients of the changes occurring around them (2005: 72) .

Stromquist (1995) outlined four specific components that she believed contribute to empowerment, ‘each equally important but none sufficient by itself to enable women to act on their own behalf’ (Stromquist, 2002: 23). These dimensions include the *cognitive* and *psychological*, the *political*, and the *economic* (Stromquist, 1995). The first two components are of particular interest here. Primarily, the cognitive element refers to the fact that women need to understand their conditions of subordination and that which is causing subordination at both a local (micro) and national (macro) level within society. In other words, generating a ‘critical understanding of one’s reality’ (Stromquist, 2002: 23). It requires women to understand themselves and the ‘need to make choices that go against cultural and social expectations, and understanding patterns of behaviour that create dependence, interdependence, and autonomy within the family and in the society at large’

(Stromquist, 1995: 14). In order to do so, women need to acquire ‘new knowledge’ in order to change how they think about the structure of gender ideologies and their place as women, and particularly involves gaining knowledge about sexuality and legal rights. In this light, they would better understand how to overcome the physical and mental control of men over them vis-à-vis their sexuality, besides knowing their rights as women in order to ‘press for their implementation and enforcement’ (1995: 14).

Secondly, the psychological dimension involves women developing the feeling that they can act at both a societal and personal level so as to improve their condition, in addition to believing that they can succeed in their effort of creating change (Stromquist, 1995: 14) – the ‘feeling of self-esteem’ (Stromquist 2002: 23). Rowlands has called this *personal* empowerment, through which increasing self-confidence can help to undo the ‘effects of internalised oppression’ (1997: 15).<sup>7</sup> Stromquist argues that some women can often internalise the idea of ‘learned helplessness’ as a result of ‘the sex role socialization’. This reduces their chances of negotiation and compromise and leads them to conform to ‘female stereotypes of passivity and self-sacrifice’, ultimately resulting in low self-esteem (1995: 15). As Pollack (2000: 77) notes, ‘the degree to which an individual experiences social conditions that are empowering inevitably influences the degree to which she possesses a sense of her own personal or psychological empowerment’.

Nevertheless, it is noted that an individual cannot be taught self-confidence and self-esteem, but that they need to engage with situations that can help these characteristics to develop (Stromquist, 1995: 15). Stacki and Monkman (2003: 182) argue that before women can manifest any form of empowerment, an educational process must happen. Deere and León assert that external agents can act as facilitators in creating the environment for empowerment processes to take place (2001: 25). One avenue for this facilitation is through Non-Formal Education (NFE) programmes, which can in turn assist women to become empowered in various ways.

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<sup>7</sup> The psychological and personal dimension of empowerment connects with how Mayoux considers *power within* to function in female empowerment, as highlighted in Table 3.

## ***Non-Formal Education***

In its most basic form, ‘education’ is defined as a process in which knowledge is shared; normally understood to take place within an institutional situation of a school, college or university (Merriam-Webster, 2013c). To be ‘educated’ is defined as an individual having an education; providing evidence of training or practice through skills; and is ‘based on some knowledge of fact’ (Merriam-Webster, 2013b). Likewise, to ‘educate’ someone is considered to consist of providing schooling; training through formal instruction and supervised practice especially in a skill, trade, or profession; to provide information and inform; and/or to persuade or condition one to feel, believe or act in a desired way (Merriam-Webster, 2013a). In this setting, therefore, the predominant mode of education is formal (see section 2.4).

In some developing countries, formal education has a history of being ‘almost nowhere compulsory’ (King, 1982: 182). This caused the international community to generate targets aimed at halving adult illiteracy and making the global population literate by 2000. During the decade of the 1990s, “Education for All” became the buzz phrase within the development sector (Torres, 2005) and ‘the battle-cry of educationalists’ (Dighe, 1998: 420). Yet as Blaak et al. (2013: 88) highlight, the latter concept that was created focused on quantitative results in school enrolment, rather than concentrating attention on the quality of education, meaning that the completion rates of schooling were frequently low. Equally, agencies such as the World Bank did not consider adult literacy as important as primary education, deeming it a failure, and instead fixated on the returns provided by primary education. In consequence, ‘the 1990s were a lost decade for adult education in most countries, with a shifting of responsibility from the state and an ever greater onus on NGOs’ (Torres, 2005: 8). “Education for All” also failed to alter the gender gap and the associated marginalisation of women in access to formal education (Dighe, 1998). Further, state-led formal education may not always meet the needs of specific individuals in certain situations, and it is suggested that people in non-urban areas of underdeveloped countries, and especially adult populations, are particularly impacted by this (Kassam, 1982). With this in mind, the concept and framework of non-formal education can be better applied in contexts where access to formal education, besides quality education, is problematic.

The notion of non-formal education has its roots in the international

development arena of the 1960s and 1970s. By the end of the 1960s, development experts were putting greater emphasis on the development of rural areas in Third World nations, rather than simply focusing efforts in urban settings. Those living in the countryside did not benefit significantly from the modernisation and industrialisation pervading urban conurbations since the 1940s, meaning a widening socioeconomic gap between the latter and ‘poverty-ridden rural sectors’ (Coombs and Ahmed, 1974: 3). Evidence demonstrated a need to develop rural areas alongside urban zones, in order for those dependent on subsistence living in poor countries to move beyond extreme poverty. A lack of education amongst the adult rural population was considered by experts to be contributing to the imbalance between rural and urban areas, which threatened progress and development for countries (Coombs and Ahmed, 1974).<sup>8</sup>

Developing countries encountered an educational crisis as they entered the 1970s. This was particularly apparent in rural areas where misallocation of resources, incompatible teaching methods, and policies focusing on formal schooling all failed to meet the educational needs of country people. As such, NFE programmes were considered to be the stepping-stone in addressing these issues (Coombs and Ahmed, 1974). For Coombs and Ahmed, non-formal education is considered to be: ‘any organized, systematic, educational activity carried on outside the framework of the formal system to provide selected types of learning to particular subgroups in the population, adults as well as children’ (1974: 8). Such activities can include training programmes for farmers, adult literacy schemes, professional training outside the formal system, and community training in health and nutrition, family planning, cooperatives, etc. (Coombs and Ahmed, 1974). La Belle asserted that non-formal education caused people to take action in order to overcome the imbalance of power and quality of life they had, which required methodical changes to be made in their behaviour through cultivating attitudes, developing skills or participating in community-based projects that were ‘designed to assist individuals either to cope with or change the environment around them’ (1986: 3). The delivery of such programmes has been associated with organisations that are primarily created within

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<sup>8</sup> The adult population of Third World nations in general has been described as the one with little income, where lives are dictated by social structures controlled by dominant groups that make adults dependent due to a lack of resources and the inability to organise to generate collective action (La Belle, 1986: 2).

communities, by communities, in order to serve the purposes of NFE in their locality (Brennan, 1997). More frequently, however, agencies will include government institutions, independent institutions (universities, colleges, schools), churches, museums, the media, and NGOs. NGOs were identified as particularly useful, as they can 'be more flexible, more decentralized and thus be closer to the people and the source of the problem' (1997: 195).

La Belle (1986: 3) reflects on the popularity and attractiveness of NFE programmes from the 1970s onwards for development organisations, such as NGOs, at a micro-level within communities. They favoured the concept, endorsing and investing in it through project implementation and research. At the same time, however, it has also been argued that:

One of the enduring themes in the literature [on NFE], has been that the education provided should be interesting to the learners and that organization and curriculum planning should preferably be undertaken by learners themselves; that it should be "bottom up". It is also often argued that this should empower learners to understand and if necessary change the social structure around them (Kravale-Paulina and Kokina, 2010: 68).

Correspondingly, Rogers purported that, as NFE debates originated in the West with Western educational reformers, NFE was consequently:

...born [into] the family of planners more than practitioners. Non-formal education was not a bottom-up creation... NFE was a creation of Western aid agencies sent out like a dove to bring peace and harmony to a disunited international educational world, a panacea for all educational ill (2005: 37).

Therefore, there appears to have been a contradiction in terms over the provision of NFE and by whom; some argue that it should be from a grassroots perspective, yet organisations external to communities are also regarded as significant in this context. In order to rectify this issue, the notion of popular education in Latin America aimed to maintain grass-roots autonomy in the provision of alternate methods of education outside the formal system.

### ***Popular Education, Consciousness-raising and Female Empowerment***

Programmes of NFE that have taken hold in Latin America since the 1950s have been referred to more frequently as 'popular education' (Stromquist, 2005). Popular education has been defined as:

... participatory, dialogical, inventive, and community orientated pedagogical practice – fosters critical consciousness...and the collective production of emancipatory knowledge and praxis – that is, ways of understanding “the world” and self that identify, demystify, and challenge prevailing relations of domination to open up new possibilities for engagement and incite collective action for change (Manicom and Walters, 2012: 3).

Consequently, it is possible to see how popular education can be linked to the notion of *power within* and *power with* outlined above. Further, the notion of popular education is also group orientated and decentralised, where a facilitator is present, rather than a teacher, who acts as a catalyst in determining a problem for analysis and resolution (La Belle, 1986: 34). The use of a facilitator can thus be linked to the notion of using an ‘external agent’ within empowerment processes (Deere and León, 2001: 25), especially in relation to facilitating the cognitive and psychological elements of empowerment (Stromquist, 2005).

In programmes that use popular education, it is the lower classes, both rural and urban, that are the focus as a ‘vehicle for altering the social order ideologically, economically, and politically’ (La Belle, 1986: 186). In many cases popular education is a ‘bottom-up approach geared toward critical reflection and gradual socioeconomic change’ (Bosch, 1998: 166). Fink helps to clarify the subtle nuances between NFE and popular education:

“Nonformal education” emphasizes the mode of learning; “popular education” focuses on the sector involved. Nonformal education tends to focus on the individual and specific technical skills development; popular education looks at community and organisational training needs, emphasizing the skills needed to bring about improvements in economic and social well-being as a whole (1992: 174).

In the Andes, popular education in particular has been used to address indigenous concerns (Laurie et al., 2005). With support from NGOs, popular education was significant within rural development and agricultural extension work during the 1970s and 1980s, generating ‘diverse experiments in alternative education for a wide range of communities with different needs and formal-educational backgrounds’ (Andolina et al., 2009: 173). La Belle (1986) identified two types of popular education efforts employed in the Latin American region; one being directed at reform, and the other at revolution. Focusing on the former, the concept of *consciousness-raising* is particularly relevant.

Consciousness-raising works as a component of popular education through its normative process, and its focus on group learning where a facilitator initiates the promotion of relationship building between participants. Discussions concerning historical experiences and socioeconomic issues, that aim to generate mutual learning about social reality from each other, are believed to help foster these relationships (La Belle, 1986). This method also aims to allow participants to achieve ‘transformed or heightened consciousness’ by ‘generating their own formulations of reality and community activity’ (La Belle, 1987: 201-202). In like vein, it has been pointed out that “daily lived experience” begins the process of consciousness-raising in the Latin American context:

This emphasizes the importance of starting with the here and now, with the most immediate experience, including all aspects of life, at home, at work, in the community, in organizations. Through this, the many contradictions in society are made evident (Walters, 1998: 441).

The concept of consciousness raising, or “Conscientisation” (Bosch, 1998), is most associated with the Brazilian educationalist, Paulo Freire, who ‘crystalized the now famous method’ that was launched in 1961 (La Belle, 1986: 171). At its inception, Freire’s focus was on the illiteracy of people in northeast Brazil, and had a view that language needed to be based in:

...the daily experience of his students... This pedagogical theory ... focuses on the decodification of language for reaching a “critical knowledge” of the speaker’s reality. By reflecting collectively and critically on the meanings of words such as “poverty”, “work” and “family”, a dialogue is established that leads to new critical consciousness of one’s culture and society (Bosch, 1998: 165).

Freire did not favour “mass education”, which he believed imposes ‘silence and passivity, stifles criticism, and makes participants objects rather than subjects of reality’ (La Belle, 1987: 202). Rather:

We needed, then, an education which would lead men to take a new stance toward their problems – that of intimacy with those problems, one orientated toward research instead of repeating irrelevant principles. An education of “I wonder”, instead of merely, “I do”... Our traditional curriculum, disconnected from life, centered on words emptied of the reality they are meant to represent, lacking in concrete activity, could never develop critical consciousness. Indeed, its own naïve dependence on high-sounding phrases, reliance on rote, and tendency toward abstractness actually intensified our naïveté (Freire, 1973: 36-37).



There has, however, been a critique over how Freire's methodology ultimately achieves social change, and ways to establish structural transformations to overcome situations of oppression experienced and realised by participants; 'there is nothing in Freire's theory or method that links up knowledge that something is wrong with an action that would do something about it' (La Belle, 1987: 205). Therefore, groups and grass-roots organisations have more recently combined Freire's method with activities that also enable socio-economic change, sometimes referring to this as "participatory education", or as popular education (Bosch, 1998).<sup>9</sup>

While it is noted that some scholars associate Freire with the origins of the empowerment concept, this is not entirely the case as it is believed that the notion of conscientisation came before empowerment (Stromquist, 2002). Nevertheless, the idea of conscientisation is 'totally compatible with the notion of empowerment' (Stromquist, 2002: 22). Relationally speaking, 'Freire describes the realization that one is being oppressed as the starting point for empowerment' (Blaak et al., 2013: 89), which thus links directly to the cognitive and psychological dimensions of female empowerment.

In the context of adult women, Stromquist (2002) believes that it is outside of formal educational institutions where empowerment can reach its highest potential. Situations that are "women-only", with a small group in a less institutionalised environment at a local level provide 'less restrictive and more creative settings' for dialogical exchange and reflection (2002: 26). By putting aside time to analyse their situations and how to overcome them, and developing skills to help increase independence and collective autonomy, it is said that women have found the ability to discuss gender issues 'extremely useful' (Stromquist, 2002: 26):

The chance to break out of the daily routine, to sit down on a regular basis with other women and community members with similar burdens, helps women recognize that they are not alone, that their problems are shared, and, upon further analysis, that the root causes go beyond individual fault or responsibility (Fink, 1992: 177).

The concept of conscientisation has been 'the method most utilized for women to recognize and challenge their subordination and marginalization', and as 'consciousness-raising promotes a belief in women's autonomy as subjects, it fosters

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<sup>9</sup> La Belle highlights that there is discussion over the origins of the concept of popular education, with some associating it with Freire and others 'with the historical struggle of the oppressed and disenfranchised' (1986: 183).

among participants a sense of their independent worth and needs' (Stromquist, 2002: 28). Further, the notion of conscientisation with women helps them to become aware of their individual agency and 'their role and needs as citizens, not just as mothers or wives' (2002: 28).

Jones notes that the idea of using methods of consciousness-raising with women can provide them with a 'better understanding and a different perspective on their problems', that allows them to be attentive to the fact that 'it is possible for them to bring about change' (1997: 279). Walters (1998: 440) argues that an essential part of consciousness-raising in women is the 'reliance on experiences and feelings...in order to affirm what they think, know, do and feel'. Increased confidence and the acquisition of new skills as a consequence of such programmes can aid women to 'become empowered to take action individually or collectively to transform their lives' (Jones, 1997: 279). Equally, the opportunity to analyse issues and identify their causes can generate a 'politicizing process that can eventually lead to broader types of social and political action' (Fink, 1992: 177).<sup>10</sup>

### ***Literacy and Empowerment***

In the absence of access to formal education for people in the developing world, literacy programmes have been an alternative mode of education, falling under the category of NFE. An argument made amongst scholars is that literacy in particular can be 'one of the most effective ways of promoting women's control over their environment' (Nussbaum, 2000: 233), with Mayoux connecting literacy and an increase in skills with *power to* (1998: 238). It is therefore worth assessing how literacy is considered as an avenue for development and empowerment.

Literacy has become a 'high-profile topic' within development circles (Stromquist, 2002: 27). According to Torres, UNESCO distinguished the initial definition of literacy in 1945, in which it was '...understood as instruction, and its teaching as a technical matter reduced to a problem of coding and decoding' (2005: 7). Rogers (2005: 30) noted how literacy has been referred to as a set of skills which are single and universally applicable, that many people lack, which affects them in both immediate and personal ways. To overcome this issue, Rogers believes that

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<sup>10</sup> This latter point here is reinforced in Chapter VI, through the discussion of indigenous women's involvement in the Escuela de Formación Dolores Cacuango in Ecuador.

there is only one type of literacy that is legitimate, but that is ‘imposed on the learners in a one-shot literacy teaching programme which is thought to convert those who have been constructed as “illiterates” into agency-defined “literates”’ (2005: 30). In 1946, UNESCO discarded the concept of literacy as an end in itself, and it was subsequently considered as a tool for development (Torres, 2005). Associating literacy with development, Rogers suggests that literacy is enabled by ‘supplying the deficits through inputs’ (2005: 30), with inputs otherwise referred to as “training”. The programme of learning in this regard does not change and is not reliant on context.

Both historically and today, literacy programmes constitute one method used by governments and NGOs in educating a populous; these projects and programmes fall within the sphere of non-formal and popular education. Literacy programmes are most frequently aimed at the adult members of society, and are associated with the notion of ‘adult education’ (Torres, 1990); as Stromquist notes, ‘at the adult level, illiteracy is basically due to differential distributions of power that results in little or no education for marginalized populations’ (2006: 140). In developing countries, an additional issue for literacy rates is that, although figures suggest there has been increased access to formal education, the cycle of primary education is not always successfully met, and ‘the schooling received in those grades by some groups is not of sufficient quality to create regular or proficient readers’ (Stromquist, 2006: 141). Lack of educational infrastructure and poorly trained teachers in rural areas contribute to this issue (Stromquist, 1992a). Further, in rural areas especially, such as those in parts of Latin America, research demonstrates that females are more likely than males to drop out of primary school before completing the primary cycle:

... the sexual division of labor that imposes upon girls and women many domestic duties and responsibilities [in rural areas] act as a major infringement on their further schooling. Girls may attend the first years of schooling, but soon tend to be withdrawn from classes (Stromquist, 1992a: 24).

At the end of the twentieth century, therefore, a significant problem for many countries in the developing world was women’s illiteracy. In Latin America, projections made for 1980 indicated that, out of the 44.3 million illiterate people in the region, some 25 million were women (La Belle, 1986: 117). Statistics published in

2013 suggested that 35.9 million people in the region were still illiterate, of which 19.8 million were female - 55 per cent (UNESCO, 2014: 10). Female illiteracy has been attributed to a number of factors, including: poverty, domestic responsibilities, a lack of support from partner, lack of time and/or motivation, and distance to travel to literacy classes (Dighe, 1998). All these issues are considered to be linked to patriarchal ideology, and inclusive of components related to the gender division of labour and men's control over women's sexual health and reproduction (Stromquist, 1992b).

In addition to gender, ethnic status is also linked to female literacy. In Latin America, for example, illiteracy amongst indigenous women is generally higher than for indigenous men and *mestizo* women. In the early 2000s, 48 per cent of indigenous women in Ecuador were illiterate, compared to 32 per cent of indigenous men and 18 per cent of non-indigenous women.<sup>11</sup> It is often those who speak unofficial and unstandardised languages that are more commonly illiterate, as these languages are not frequently targeted in literacy programmes (Gradstein and Schiff, 2006: 16-17). Literacy learning for indigenous women in rural areas is particularly tied to mother tongue language, as these women 'tend to be more monolingual in their native language than similar men' (Stromquist, 2006: 145). The consequence of monolingualism is that women have 'restricted geographical mobility and less access to jobs outside the home'. This means they do not engage with those who speak the country's official language and thus 'they develop a more limited competency in the official language of the country; they develop also less need to become literate (Stromquist, 1992a: 25). There has consequently been a demand to have access to learning the 'official' country language in both written and oral modes so as to improve opportunities from a socio-economic and political perspective.<sup>12</sup> Literacy programmes for adults, 'have been common to most countries in the region' of Latin America (La Belle, 1986: 117) As Torres notes:

The results of adult education are more immediate than those of formal education... The demands for this type of education... are made by socially oppressed sectors... adult education has proved to be of great importance as an instrument of mobilization and the development of political consciousness (1990: 9).

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<sup>11</sup> This is supported by Ames, who documents similar findings in Peru (2005: 149).

<sup>12</sup> International trends associated with literacy and adult education have varied over the years, as demonstrated by La Belle (186), Rogers (2005), Stromquist (2006), and Torres (2005).

Literacy programmes of this nature can of course be linked back to the pedagogical philosophies of Freire discussed earlier. With the advent of the 1960s and the progressive ideas that focused on liberation processes, literacy education was included as a phenomenon in which social change could occur in populations through participation and consciousness-raising. Freire's ideological framework of a "liberating education" promoted adult literacy education in a new way, in which it fell under the category of popular education in Latin America (Torres, 2005: 7). Under the influence of Freire, therefore, literacy was interpreted as a form of 'power':

Non-literates are defined as being oppressed by the literate; and the general purpose of learning literacy skills is to achieve 'empowerment' and to change the systems, to help the oppressed through literacy to achieve their liberation. 'Participation' in this paradigm means not just attending literacy classes but joining in the group activities rather than being passive learners. 'Drop-outs' are reinterpreted in terms of 'push-outs' (Rogers, 2005: 30-31).

In relation to women, literacy is suggested to produce psychological empowerment through increased self-confidence and an improved ability to function at a familial level (Stromquist, 2002: 27). As Milheim (2009: 11) purports, 'the ability to read and write signifies opportunity for empowerment', and literacy and numeracy are believed to provide women with socio-economic and political independence (Leach, 1998). Literacy is also linked to female empowerment through its ability to generate 'full and expanded citizenship' (Stromquist, 2006: 140), besides increasing women's confidence to 'participate more actively in their communities', and inspiring them 'to exercise their right to political and economic participation' (UNESCO, 2012: 38). However, as Stromquist (2002: 27) argues, this empowerment is not generated as a consequence of simply learning how to read and write, but from 'classroom experiences that provide the opportunity for women to discuss problems with others and exchange viewpoints' that arise out of their literacy classes. Literacy classes combined with discussions concerning health, family planning or income-generating activities have the potential to be very beneficial to women (Leach, 1998). Nonetheless, for strategies in women's literacy to be successful in contributing to empowerment, they would need to cover all aspects of women's lives such as the socio-economic, political, cultural and legal. The

programmes would need to ‘evolve in response to specific local contexts’ (Dighe, 1998: 425). In order to meet these things, one way could be through literacy with skills or vocational training (Leach, 1998); such as through agricultural production and processing, or artisan and textiles (Dighe, 1998).

## ***2.4 Formal Education as a Means to Development and Empowerment***

One of the most commonly referred to definitions of formal education within scholarly literature is that of Coombs and Ahmed: ‘The highly institutionalized, chronologically graded and hierarchically structured “education system”, spanning lower primary school and the upper reaches of the university’ (1974: 8). Formal education corresponds to ‘a systematic, organised education model, structured and administered according to a given set of laws and norms, presenting a rather rigid curriculum as regards objectives, content and methodology’ (Dib, 1987: 1). Hunter outlines how formal education and schooling is seen by some as ‘the major means by which individuals acquire the mental skills and capacities for self-direction necessary for successful future performance in an occupation’ (1988: 753). In this sense, the goal of formal education is to prepare individuals for occupations and the workplace. On the other hand, formal education is also seen as ‘primarily a means of shaping and certifying people’s values, attitudes, and habits, and only secondarily, at most, as a mechanism for imparting skills as such or as an indicator of technical trainability’ (Hunter, 1988: 753).

Regardless of how formal education is considered in terms of its functionality for the individual concerned, in many countries formal education is the ‘dominant influence’ on children and young people for many of their formative years (La Belle, 1982). Across the globe, most nation-states have recognised formal education policies in place that are intended to:

... provide technical training, humanistic understanding, and relative common ground on values and identity. Nation building is accomplished partly through education institutions that prepare students as citizens to obtain the common cultural ground and values that will support the technical, social, cultural and political demands of the nation-state (Champagne and Abu-Saad, 2006: 3).

Thus, from this latter perspective, formal education is not only about providing an environment for learning and developing knowledge in the individual, but is also about aiding progress and creating advancement for their countries on a global scale.

There is a broad belief, therefore, that formal education is key to economic and social development. In the developing world, however, for people in rural and poverty stricken areas, access to school and formal education is often very limited; ‘tens of millions of children across the developing world... grow up without receiving the most basic education’ (Herz and Sperling, 2004: 1). In consequence, since the 1960s, ‘widening access to education has been a major policy goal in most developing countries’ (Hill and King, 1997: 9). The educational crisis of children in the Third World instigated 180 governments to commit to address this issue by ‘pledging that every boy and girl will receive a quality basic education by 2015’ (Herz and Sperling, 2004: 1). This point lies at the root of Goal Number 2 of the United Nation’s Millennium Development Goals (MDGs); to ‘ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling’ (United Nations, 2013).

On the face of it, it would appear that significant steps have been made in order to achieve this goal. According to the UN, enrolment in primary education in developing regions reached 90 per cent in 2010, but 57 million children remain out of school; this latter figure has dropped from 102 million children in the year 2000 (United Nations, 2013). Interestingly, there is disparity in the educational attainment of children in the Latin American region with other parts of the developing world, which can be attributed to the fact that education has become a higher priority since 1960 and public spending in this sector has risen in many of the continent’s countries since then (Bustillo, 1993). Nevertheless, an issue that continues to pervade discussions concerning formal education across Third World nations is that of barriers and access to education for girls.

In the early 2000s, out of 104 million children that were not in school each year between the ages of 6 and 11, 60 million of them were girls (Herz and Sperling, 2004: 2). As Warner et al. (2012: 6) assert:

...girls and women are more likely than boys and men to have their education cut short due to adverse circumstances such as poverty, conflict, natural disasters, or economic downturn. And girls who belong to religious, ethnic, linguistic, racial or other minorities are more likely than other girls to

be excluded from school.

Access to education by women and girls is considered a fundamental right today, and improving the education of girls 'is a central policy aim of the international development community and most developing country governments' (Pande et al., 2005: 2). Further, enabling gender equality in education is also an important component of the MDGs. Research has demonstrated that there is a favourable impact on numerous development outcomes when women are educated, including 'maternal and children's health, more sustainable families... democracy, income growth, and productivity'. The socio-economic benefits are great, and investing in girls education 'is one of the soundest investments any country can make' (Herz and Sperling, 2004: 1-21).

### ***Formal Education and Female Empowerment***

In addition to the above, education has been linked to women's empowerment by enhancing well-being and giving 'them greater voice in household decisions, greater autonomy to determine the conditions of their lives, and improved opportunities to participate in community affairs and the labor market' (Pande et al., 2005: 2). In this sense, formal education can be perceived as a mechanism to develop *power to*. This in turn also complies with Stromquist's component of economic empowerment, in which women have more opportunity to be employed in a productive activity and achieve a level of financial income and autonomy (Stromquist, 2002: 23).<sup>13</sup>

Pande et al. (2005) question to what extent there is empirical support for the assumption that education enhances well-being, and examine four specific 'spheres' where it is believed that the - of women and empowerment is most desirable vis-à-vis access to education. These areas of concern include health and well-being, familial and social position, economic opportunities and returns, and political participation. In brief, Pande et al. found that 'the empirical literature suggests that a range of underlying social and economic conditions need to be favorable in order for female education to have a beneficial effect on gender equality and women's wellbeing' (2005: 38). Such conditions may include the availability of high quality

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<sup>13</sup> Stromquist (1995) has argued that the psychological dimension of empowerment needs to be complemented by the economic.



health care to go alongside educating girls about sexual health; favorable labour market conditions and job creation to support skills developed in school; and access to support systems that are in place to help women in cases such as fleeing from domestic violence together with educating women that enables them to escape violent situations (2005: 39).

Prior to the above analytical study by Pande et al., scholars questioned the link between education and employment and increased levels of empowerment for women in the late 1990s, as little empirical work had been carried out to support the theoretical underpinnings of this argument. It had been perceived that education was central to obtaining paid work and thus improving women's position due to 'recent historical experience of Western gender systems'. Thus, academics working in the field of feminism and development 'implied the existence of a similar relationship in non-Western societies'. It did not take into consideration the 'more complex and less well-understood systemic and cultural factors defining gender inequality in a wide range of social systems', meaning that the link between schooling and paid work were 'appealing as simple, concrete, universal, and politically acceptable goals'. Nevertheless, 'their influence may have been exaggerated' (Malhotra and Mather, 1997: 600-601).

In their micro-level case study of Sri Lankan women, Malhotra and Mather (1997) investigated the relationship between formal education, paid employment and domestic power in decision-making. They concluded that the relationship 'is conditioned by the larger social context, and thus 'it is likely to reflect the extent to which the division of labour and access to information and economic resources are the bases of domestic power in the society under consideration' (1997: 601). They finished with three broad suppositions that they believed important to consider when analysing the role of education and employment in women's domestic power:

- 1) to define the gendered nature of power specifically and multidimensionally
- 2) to consider the historical and developmental context of the society under consideration
- 3) to look beyond simplistic measures of education and employment to consider the broader range of social, household, and life course factors relevant to gender and family relations (1997: 625).

For her part, Murphy-Graham considers how women's empowerment can be fostered in intimate relationships through education. She states, 'intimate

relationships are the most salient loci for experiencing power relations, yet they have often been overlooked by research on the role of education in fostering women's empowerment' (2010: 321). In brief, she concluded that education could potentially generate empowerment for women in their intimate relationships if:

... it improves their gender consciousness, relational resources, and material resources... In sum, ensuring that education enables students to develop friendships, express their ideas clearly, negotiate with others and demonstrate care and concern towards others may help to tap the transformative potential of education, particularly to change household gender relations (2010: 329-330).

In a study of Zambian women and education by Hlupekile Longwe, the author addressed whether or not formal schooling acts as a process of empowerment for women. She questioned if it does in fact reinforce women's subordination, based on the concept that an individual woman who 'can get ahead' on the basis of education, 'has got ahead of her sisters by her improved access to resources, and utilization of these resources' (1998: 22).<sup>14</sup> She further argued that schools are patriarchal environments where students are 'schooled to conform, and to do as they are told'. In this sense, she said patriarchy is instilled in girls and they are taught to accept authority, preventing them from asking questions or thinking for themselves, which contradicts the notion of education (1998: 24):

Females are schooled to accept "naturalness" of male domination. They are schooled to accept success on male terms. The few women who reach the top are schooled to behave as "honorary males"... Such an "honorary male" is often also a "queen bee": the last thing she wants to do is to enable any other woman to follow in her tracks... She is violently opposed to affirmative action to increase the proportion of women, and will argue that "I got here on merit, and so must others!" Here we see that schooling facilitates the promotion of a few women within the existing patriarchal system. The honorary male contributes to the continuation of the system that subordinates her sisters. In other words, it is schooling for self-reliance, not education for empowerment (1998: 24).

Therefore, with the above in mind, it is clear that there are questions over the extent to which formal education of women can enable female empowerment, on what levels, and in what ways. Yet it also seems to potentially be dependent on the cultural context in which education is taking place as to how education can empower

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<sup>14</sup> In their study on higher educational and women in Pakistan, Malik and Courtney argue that educational institutions 'contribute to women's subordination rather than helping to empower them' (2011: 40) as a consequence of gender biases in the education system and curriculum.

women, especially as there appears to be contradictions present amongst academics. Stromquist states that 'educational settings have the potential to foster all four dimensions [of empowerment] but require the education programme to be designed explicitly to achieve each of those ends' (2002: 23). While Stromquist contends that empowerment can be achieved in primary and secondary education, she argues that schools should provide an atmosphere that promotes the participation of girls as well as boys in classrooms, to allow girls to 'learn not to be intimidated by boys and to speak their minds' (2002: 25). As such, this would encourage girls to 'explore a more complete range of life options and develop fuller personalities' (2002: 25).

When girls and women do obtain formal education, scholars have noted the positive impacts that this can have for female empowerment on multiple levels, enhancing all of Stromquist's four components of empowerment in addition to being 'an entry point to other opportunities, ... [and] the educational achievements of women can have ripple effects within the family and across generations' (Kumar Paul et al., 2013: 3). Along similar lines, Noreen and Khalid argue that:

Education ... ensures a future civilized society, as educated women are more prone to provide better training to their children... educated women and workingwomen are more confident as compared to educated women who are domestic workers. They consider themselves valued persons...who can do something for their families. The life of educated women is different from uneducated as they have a different approach towards life and different styles to solve the problems of life (2012: 72).

In addition to providing socio-economic and political opportunities, Murphy-Graham considers education as part of the empowerment process through its ability to allow children and adults to:

... develop their senses, imagination, and thought; their ability to reason; and their relationships with and concern for others...women's education is no longer emphasized solely because of its economic or social benefits. Rather, education is seen as a way to expand women's opportunities to live meaningful lives (2012: 13).

Likewise, 'a quality education can also enhance girls' aspirations, autonomy and decision-making ability, all of which contribute to their capacity to envision and plan for their futures' (Warner et al., 2012: 8). As education is recognised to help develop knowledge, self-confidence and an awareness of gender equity, clearly all indicators of empowerment (Noreen and Khalid, 2012), scholars advocate that higher education at university can help promote these processes significantly. They posit

that 'women in professional courses, get exposed to new ideas, making them challenge the existing norms and approach behavioural changes more openly than less educated women' (Maslak and Singhal, 2008: 484). In a study by Malik and Courtney it was found that, while obtaining economic independence was a strong motivating factor for studying at a higher education level for women in Pakistan, women gained 'increased levels of confidence and the experience of gaining a voice within the family and wider community' as a result of higher education (2011: 34). They would be 'consulted and listened to in a wide variety of contexts', meaning 'women are enabled to contribute to family affairs and the wider society more fully' (2011: 34).

Stromquist (2002) suggests that the possibilities for empowerment of women who attend university may be stronger because there is now more opportunity for women to access higher education in many countries. Further, 'being older, university students are more mature and (some) can reflect on the implications of complexity of their surrounding society' (2002: 25). Equally, Warner et al. observe that 'at the tertiary level, young women currently outperform men in tertiary enrollment in many regions, suggesting that there may be good value and return to investing in girls' education at lower levels' (2012: 7). This is supported by Pande et al., in that 'relatively high levels of education – secondary or above – are consistently positively related to most aspects of gender equality, empowerment, and wellbeing, regardless of other conditions' (2005: 39). On the other hand, Warner et al. also state that:

... segregation persists in the fields of study in tertiary education, with young women being overrepresented in the health and education sectors, and underrepresented in engineering, manufacturing, construction and sciences. This has important implications for women's earning potential, since there is a strong association between math and science skills and increased earnings (2012: 7).

This issue is particularly acute for women in rural areas, as 'rural women graduates with agricultural degrees have been channeled to teaching in schools and have not achieved the mobility to which they have aspired' (Jayaweera, 1997: 418). Likewise, Malik and Courtney noticed that having obtained permission from their parents to study at higher education level, women in Pakistan are also influenced by their families with regards to which subjects they will study, which university they will go

to, and the type of accommodation that they will use whilst studying. Thus not only are women in tertiary education sometimes restricted to certain fields of study, but ‘significant restrictions on making choices for themselves still apply’ (2011: 39), which could ultimately impact on the overall level of empowerment achieved as a result of higher education.

As the level of education one acquires is assumed to influence the earning potential of that individual, there are other reasons that García-Aracil and Winter highlight in relation to the relationship between earnings and schooling for women that go against this argument, simply based on the notion of gender. They include:

- Differential opportunity costs of schooling for males and females
- Gender differences in traits, such as manual dexterity, stamina, or strength, that are valued by the market
- Gender specialisation in jobs and relative scarcity of one gender
- Sex discrimination in the labor market (2005: 289).

They also emphasise that the ‘rate of return’ for schooling females in relation to domestic productivity might be lower, ‘since school-age girls are generally more valuable in providing child care for siblings and in helping with cooking and other housework’ (2005: 290).

The subject of gender in education is a more dramatic matter when combined with the issue of ethnicity. This is particularly relevant when referring to indigenous people. García-Aracil and Winter note that indigenous people across the globe are in an ‘inferior economic and social position vis-à-vis the non-indigenous or “mainstream” population’ (2005: 290). The right and access to education for indigenous people is protected by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, in addition to other various international apparatus such as the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. Yet statistics suggest that this right to education for indigenous people has not been fully realised for the majority of indigenous groups, and a ‘critical education gap exists between the indigenous peoples and the general population’ (Secretariat of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, 2010: 1).

Regarding education and indigenous women, becoming empowered through formal education has historically been a challenge due to the “double burden” of their ethnicity and gender, and the socio-economic and political connotations and barriers that both these phenomena hold for them as indigenous women (Bronstein,

1982). As Bethal states, ‘the barriers that have traditionally been formed by issues such as difference of gender, culture and race form...part of the complex dilemma that stands in the way of access and equity [to education]’ (2007: 53). This is supported by Malhotra and Mather, in that ‘at the most basic level, how much schooling women receive or whether they are expected to work is likely to depend on their socioeconomic class and ethnic status’ (1997: 607). In Latin America, for example, access to education by indigenous girls is frequently noted to be less than for indigenous boys. In the late 1990s for example, indigenous adult women in Ecuador were found to have less than ‘four years of schooling as compared to indigenous males’ eight years of schooling. Indigenous women not only have the lowest educational attainment levels of any group, but also the lowest average monthly earnings’ (García-Aracil and Winter, 2005: 292).

Taking all of the above into consideration, Solanki and Sharma state that inequalities in education, and related outcomes such as these discussed herein, are a ‘major infringement of the right of women and girls and an important barrier to social and economic development’ (2013: 129). Therefore, not only is creating the right environment for females to achieve empowerment through formal education of key concern, but access to formal education in the first place is a major issue. Researchers and international development practitioners hold this latter point at the forefront of many projects worldwide (Mannathoko, 2008; Stromquist, 2005; 2006; UNESCO, 2003; Unterhalter, 2005). While the theory suggests positive empowering outcomes of formal education for women in the developing world, a question remains over the extent to which these transpire in reality.

<b>Formal Education and Women's Empowerment</b>	
<b>POTENTIAL OUTCOMES</b>	<b>LIMITATIONS</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Greater voice in decision-making within the family and community</li> <li>✓ Greater independence / autonomy</li> <li>✓ Improved opportunities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Within community affairs</li> <li>➤ Economically and employability</li> <li>➤ Financial returns</li> <li>➤ Political participation</li> </ul> </li> <li>✓ Altered position in family and society</li> <li>✓ Enhanced consciousness/awareness of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Gender inequalities</li> <li>➤ Gender relations within household and society</li> </ul> </li> <li>✓ Development of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Self-confidence</li> <li>➤ Knowledge</li> <li>➤ Ability to reason</li> <li>➤ Ability to challenge existing norms</li> <li>➤ Ability to approach behaviours, problems, and life differently</li> <li>➤ Imagination; thoughts; senses</li> <li>➤ Aspirations</li> <li>➤ Capacity to envision/plan the future</li> <li>➤ Relationships; concern for others</li> <li>➤ Reflection on society's complexities</li> </ul> </li> <li>✓ Create generational changes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Encourage education in children</li> <li>➤ Altered attitudes towards education</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Ethnicity</li> <li>➤ Class</li> <li>➤ Location of household; rural graduate sometimes limited to particular field of study</li> <li>➤ Familial expectations</li> <li>➤ Reinforced gender roles within formal education</li> <li>➤ Characteristics required by markets: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strength</li> <li>• Stamina</li> <li>• Manual skills</li> <li>• Gender specialization</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

**Table 4: Potential Outcomes of, and Limitations on, Formal Education for Women's Empowerment**

## ***2.5 Empowerment through Public Engagement and Leadership***

This section directly connects to the data presented in Chapter VI concerning Cañari women's engagement in public spaces. The latter links to the topic of political empowerment. The political dimension of women's empowerment requires that women have the ability to mobilise and organise themselves for social change; this can be done on both an individual and collective basis. Stromquist links this to having an 'awareness of the power inequalities' prior to organisation and mobilisation (2002: 23), which, based on the above, could be achieved through consciousness-raising, for example. For Monkman, political empowerment has to do with 'access to decision-making processes involving the state,... typically through voting, collective action, and other means of having one's voice heard' (1998: 499).

Increasing women's political empowerment was also at the centre of the Beijing Platform for Action in 1995, interpreted as expanding women's 'participation

in decision-making at both domestic and public levels, in order to bring about gender equality in the distribution of resources' (Longwe, 2000: 24). For Deshmukh-Ranadive, women exercise private and public levels of political space in the following way:

The first relates to the political situation within the domestic unit... The second level, public political space, has to do with women's access to and control of public office and their participation in the administration and governance of society and institutions locally, regionally, and nationally. Access to this public space is in part a function of personality traits such as courage, determination, and qualities of leadership (2005: 112).

The need to discuss increasing women's political empowerment in the first place highlights the fact that women are underrepresented in politics worldwide. Reasons often linked to this include women having lower levels of education and literacy than men, a lack of self-confidence, assertiveness and perceived leadership qualities, including a lack of initiative at a community level (Longwe, 2000: 24).

Women's engagement with public spaces can be connected to women's political empowerment, which in turn can be directly related to *power with*, or 'increased solidarity with other women for change at household, community and macro-levels' (Mayoux, 1998: 238). By becoming part of women's networks or movements and increasing solidarity, *power with* other women is said to challenge gender subordination at the community and macro-level (1998: 238), due to the existence of a common purpose or understanding to achieve collective goals (Oxaal & Baden, 1997: 1). In her study of rural indigenous women in Mexico, Zapata uses informants words to describe how:

The joy of sharing, meeting, working and being together develops 'power with' as something that "gives us strength and courage... to go out and prove ourselves", as "the power we are building out of the group". It is the opportunity to grow together, to lose fear together and to become aware together of the society in which we live... 'Power with' can be expressed in different ways, such as the search for a shared identity, the chance to negotiate as a group, to look for outside backing, all building up power in a creative, positive way (1999: 93-94).<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Corcoran-Nantes notes in her work on gender and political movements, and looking at urban women's involvement in non-institutional politics states: the 'majority of women who participate in the popular social movements are not motivated by a feminist consciousness; feminism for them has very little to do with the reality of their lives. In Latin American society the marked inequality in the distribution of the wealth and resources has further reinforced the idea among women of the urban poor, that feminism is a middle class ideology for women who have all the social and economic advantages' (1997: 140).



In the same body of research as above, Zapata et al. state that the common position that all the women had was their 'belief that only through "power with" can they make the changes they desire' (1999: 165). With this in mind, Mohanty outlines that Western scholars are criticised by Third World Feminism for frequently clustering "women" into an easily categorised group. In doing so, it is assumed that 'an ahistorical, universal unity between women based on a generalized notion of their subordination' exists (2003: 31). Consequently, in constituting women as a 'coherent group', the Western world can fail to 'analytically demonstrat[e] the production of women as socioeconomic political groups within particular local contexts' (2003: 31). Systematically, therefore, Mohanty argues that 'this analytical move limits the definition of the female subject to gender identity, completely bypassing social class and ethnic identities' (2003: 31).

Monkman has associated collective action with the facilitation and generation of leadership skills:

...participating in women's organizations – experiencing group relations in a setting where gender dynamics are not as they are in the mainstream – can lead to political empowerment. It is here that leadership skills can more easily be developed ... Exercising leadership...and engaging in social action that challenges gender inequalities are areas in which political empowerment is developed (1998: 505).

### ***Developing Leadership Skills via Public Engagement***

The narratives of participants explored in Chapter VI make reference to the topic of leadership. An interesting question to ask here is what the word 'leader' and 'leadership' mean. The definition and explanation of these phenomena in various contexts and disciplines have entailed significant scholarship (Bass and Bass, 2008; Chhokar et al., 2008; House et al., 2004; Nohria and Khurana, 2010; Schein, 2010). As Rowe highlights, 'a leader' can be either an individual or a group of people in an 'identifiable unit', and 'leadership' functions as a process rather than a 'thing' (2006: 1529). In line with this, Porter and Henderson Daniel state that 'becoming a successful leader is a lifelong process that unfolds and evolves through the roles we assume in our ...lives' (2008: 245). Equally, the process of leadership can occur within groups whereby one person 'influences and controls the behavior of the other members toward some common goal' (Denmark, 1993: 343), thereby taking

on a hierarchical structure of power, or a 'command and control' model (Shapiro and Leigh, 2008: 92). As Porter and Henderson Daniel contend, the notion of leadership has historically been considered as 'the province of men operating in a stereotypically masculine, and even heroic, fashion in primarily hierarchical and patriarchal structures' (2008: 248). Alternative understandings of leadership include the requirement to have 'responsive followers' in order to generate a collective activity (Denmark, 1993: 350).

When considering leadership in relation to women's empowerment, leadership for collective action becomes directly linked to 'power' in various ways. In their study of female leaders, empowerment and collective action, Astin and Leland suggest that power is an 'expandable resource that is produced and shared through interaction by leader and followers alike' (1991: 1). For Zapata, women leaders 'must understand subordination to share the knowledge with others and work for a more equal society' (1999: 99). Further, Astin and Leland argued that studying female leaders 'offers an opportunity to enhance knowledge and behavior involved in transformational leadership and specifically in empowerment' (1991: 1).

Today, social changes that contrast with the past have demanded new models of leadership that incorporate 'collaboration, empowerment and inclusion', all characteristics of what has been termed 'transformational leadership' (Porter and Henderson Daniel, 2008: 248). This model of leadership includes four elements of behaviour on the part of the leader: inspirational motivation, idealised influence, individualised consideration, and intellectual stimulation (Kark et al., 2003).<sup>16</sup> Kark et al. suggest that the motivation and ability of followers increases as an outcome of transformational leadership, which is also influenced by 'empowering behaviours such as delegation of responsibility to followers, enhancing followers' capacity to think on their own, and encouraging them to come up with new and creative ideas' (2003: 248). Consequently, the hierarchy present in past styles of leadership is removed and both leader and follower ideally work together to achieve the same

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<sup>16</sup> Porter and Henderson Daniel provide the following definitions of these four components: Inspirational motivation is 'stirring others to action by communicating one's vision vividly, with optimism and enthusiasm'; Idealised influence is 'modelling behaviors that place the group's good over one's personal needs and reflect high ethical standards'; Individualized consideration is 'supporting, coaching and encouraging constituents'; Intellectual stimulation is 'problem solving with constituents in collaborative and innovative ways' (2008: 249).

aim. As Shapiro and Leigh suggest, ‘the nurturing of others becomes the major goal of effective transformational leaders’ (2008: 94)

Suyemoto and Ballou point out that some women intentionally set out to become leaders and believe they hold ‘leadership skills’. On the other hand, others ‘become leaders almost “accidentally” through their contributions... These leaders may be more likely to see themselves as influencers, collaborators, or contributors’, meaning that ‘in various contexts, with various people, for various goals, a multitude of characteristics, behaviours, and skills can be “leadership”’ (2008: 41). Equally, when considering female leadership as a form of *power within* in non-western cultures, Suyemoto and Ballou consider the following as important features to reflect on:

The connection between community and family, the emphasis on trust and community between women to heal from trauma and oppression and to foster one another, the affirmation and support that is felt multi-generationally, and the powerful historical connections known through experience lived in struggle (2008: 47).

At the same time, through their analysis of women’s lived experience of ‘leading’ and ‘following’ in diverse and patriarchal situations, Suyemoto and Ballou developed an alternative idea of female leadership they called ‘coaction leadership’, employing characteristics that are collaborative, socio-politically sensitive and contextualised. This model of leadership recognises that hierarchy and collaboration may mean different things across cultures and contexts (2008: 49-51).

Previous studies concerning indigenous women leaders in Ecuador have pinpointed a number of factors that may influence women’s ability to obtain leadership roles (O’Connor, 2007). Prieto et al. (2005) advocate there are two models of indigenous women’s leadership visible - past and contemporary. Referring to the work of Crespi (1976), Prieto et al. (2005) highlight how it was suggested that indigenous women’s leadership previously had a strategic nature, in which working on the hacienda via custom rather than contract, with a lack of access to property and resources, gave them greater freedom and mobile capacity. They could move around more easily and become involved in organisations.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, knowledge and roles associated with health and

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<sup>17</sup> Here, according to Prieto (2010), Crespi (1976) was particularly referring to Dolores Cacungo, a female leader in the Northern Ecuadorian Andes during the pre-land reform era

sickness, along with belonging to prestigious families, have also been highlighted as factors in past constructions of indigenous women's leadership. In contrast, women's contemporary leadership is associated with education, development projects, community representation, and participation in organisations and political spaces (Prieto et al., 2005: 169).

In the late 1990s, CEPLAES in Ecuador carried out a project entitled '*Indigenous Women Leaders: Lessons and Challenges*', which investigated the latter within the Amazonian and highland Quichua communities via life history methodology. The findings of part of this research were reported by Cervone et al. (1998). In Cervone's (1998) study of indigenous female leadership in *cantón* Suscal in Cañar province, interviews with ten indigenous community members demonstrated three principal elements that they believed women should possess in order to become a leader:

- 1) Familial history of leadership - either via their father, brothers or husband
- 2) Participation in activities related to education - particularly with infant daycare workers
- 3) Familial support - especially during their time outside the home carrying out tasks related to their leadership position.

Male migration also figured, as the absence of men would often increase women's responsibilities at both a domestic and community level, with women replacing men in the latter domain; 'this replacement has allowed many women to open up paths towards leadership, beginning with community tasks in cooperatives and later in councils' (Cervone, 1998: 173). The issues that people in Suscal believed went against women's leadership roles included:

- 1) Domestic violence and jealousy - barriers to women travelling out of the community or participating in meetings that finish late at night due to the risk of domestic fights upon return;

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along with Tránsito Amaguaña (Rodas, 2007; 2009). Neither of these women had access to hacienda land. Crespi argues that this therefore promoted Cacungo's ability to become a leader, as these women were invisible to the hacienda structure. Cacungo was able to avoid State repression more easily, allowing her to become more mobile and achieve autonomy and respect (Prieto, 2010).

- 2) Lack of formal education - due to families preferring to educate boys over girls, producing a feeling of inadequacy and lack of confidence to speak in public;
- 3) Maternity and motherhood - pregnancy acts as an obstacle to assuming leadership roles, particularly in activities outside the community requiring travel. Motherhood subsequently restricts women to the home (Cervone, 1998b: 174).

Nonetheless, Cervone observed a rise in female indigenous leaders, which could be linked to tasks associated with a “feminine” field, e.g., activities related to education and infant daycare. Being spheres of work in which men are not significantly involved, due to associations with maternity, Cervone’s research informants stated that education and childcare was not considered prestigious in indigenous communities. Therefore, as some women had become leaders in these areas, the lack of importance given to these tasks by men had ironically favoured the construction of female leadership. This also applies to the responsibility of women as the family administrator. Consequently, by acting upon a female domain rather than challenging spaces usually assigned the domain of men, indigenous women found themselves being able to access leadership training, which had resulted in elections to prominent roles in the community as a result (Cervone, 1998b).<sup>18</sup> Since this study, the significance of education and a history of leadership within families have been considered as key motivators towards indigenous women establishing leadership positions (Cervone, 2002; O’Connor, 2007). In many cases, these two elements are interconnected. Equally important is the recognition that, today, indigenous women often begin their leadership processes at a local level, before moving outwards into the provincial, regional or national arenas (Palacios, 2005; Picq, 2008). Palacios suggests this is due to community organisations being an extension of the family, ‘where women have roles of greater importance’ (2005: 320). These latter points also connect with the theoretical framework of social capital.

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<sup>18</sup> This argument has also been associated with Dolores Cacuango’s leadership. O’Connor highlights how Cacuango used her experiences as a mother to political advantage, turning the ‘notion that women belonged to the domestic sphere... into a source of political strength’ (2007: 197). This was evidenced particularly through Cacuango’s demand for, and development of, bilingual education for indigenous children.

## ***2.6 Resources, Agency and Outcomes: Social Capital and Human Capabilities***

An alternative framework for addressing the idea of *power within*, besides *power with* and *power to*, is by considering empowerment as being built of resources and agency, which generate achievements and outcomes. For Kabeer, empowerment is often about ‘the process by which those who have been denied the ability to make strategic life choices acquire such an ability’ (1999a: 435). In order to do so, however, one requires *resources*, such as social, human and material capital, that act as the ‘pre-condition’ of empowerment. Resources are elements of empowerment that ‘serve to enhance the ability to exercise choice’, which are acquired via the ‘multiplicity of social relationships conducted in the various institutional domains which make up a society’. Such examples include the family, community and the market (1999a: 437). In this thesis, the discussion of social resources found within families, communities and indigenous organisations are most relevant.

### ***The Resource of Social Capital***

A key focus within the data analysis is the role of families within the lives of the research participants, especially when discussing women’s access to, and obtainment of, an education (Chapter V). The role of family also pertains to issues related to women’s public engagement (Chapter VI). Within these discussions, it is possible to consider the family as a social unit that acts as an empowering *resource* for women in many cases. In turn, this links to the concept of *family capital* that arises from theories of *social capital*. Fundamentally, for the individual, ‘social capital’ holds the idea that family, friends and colleagues ‘constitute an important asset, one that can be called upon in a crisis, enjoyed for its own sake, and (when necessary) leveraged for material gain’ (Woolcock and Narayan, 2006: 32). They reinforce this point by considering more collective social units:

What is true for individuals... also holds for groups. Those communities endowed with a diverse stock of social networks and civic associations will be in a stronger position to confront poverty and vulnerability, resolve disputes, or take advantage of new opportunities (2006: 32).

The notion of social capital has become increasingly popular within the social sciences, used across a number of disciplines to address numerous fields of analysis

due to its wide-ranging applicability (Furstenberg, 2005). Consequently, there exist various definitions of social capital dependent on the discipline in which it is used (Adler and Kwon, 2002). Taking an approach from within sociology, social capital is said to be:

... defined by its function. It is not a single entity but a variety of different entities, with two elements in common: they all consist of some aspect of social structures, and they facilitate certain actions of actors...within the structure. Like other forms of capital, social capital is productive, making possible the achievement of certain ends that in its absence would not be possible (Coleman, 1988: S98).

Nevertheless, social capital is often identified as being built on obligations, expectations and trust, whereby reciprocity is at the centre (Coleman, 1988), and there is 'a system of normative obligations created by social consensus. Individuals can draw on this type of system for help and support, but they are also obligated to respond to others' (Furstenberg, 2005: 810). Further, within the social capital concept, there are two particular types of social capital that can be applied to analysis. These are called "bridging" and "bonding". As Adler and Kwon state, "bridging" is used to refer to external relations, through which the focus is on how social capital acts as a resource within a social network in order to tie a 'focal actor to other actors'. In turn, it can explain the 'differential success of individuals' (2002: 19). "Bonding", on the other hand, is concerned with the internal characteristics of a collectivity such as a community or organisation, which enable 'cohesiveness and thereby facilitate the pursuit of collective goals' (2002: 21).

The theory of social capital has also taken hold within development discourse. Fine (2007) notes that users' 'gargantuan appetite' for the concept particularly began within development during the latter half of the 1990s, and was heavily promoted by the World Bank especially (Molyneux, 2002), which associated it with empowerment (see Bebbington et al., 2006). In relation to female empowerment, social capital has been connected to the concept through the establishment of micro-finance programmes (Mayoux, 2001; Rankin, 2002; Sanyal, 2009) and collective action within women's organisations (Bayard de Volo, 2006). Mokomane (2012) also recognises the role of families in generating social capital that can lead to empowerment, which can directly relate to women's experiences.

Mokomane states that the family carries out functions associated with

production, consumption, reproduction and accumulation, which help facilitate empowerment (2012: 2). The term given to these functions of a family is ‘family capital’. Coleman recognised the role of family in generating social capital, but argued that the family needed to be broken down into three separable components of analysis: financial capital, human capital and social capital. Financial capital is to be measured by the family’s wealth or income, and affords appropriate physical environments to aid achievement. Human capital is viewed as the level of education held by a parent that provides cognitive help to offspring to aid learning. A family’s social capital refers to the relationships between children and their parents, and helps the human capital within a family to be fostered (1988: S109-S110). As Belcher et al. state, family capital therefore:

...becomes a critical component in the socialization, and the cognitive or social development of children... Family capital is the “aggregate of family resources” that are essential in assisting and supporting in the transition from youth into adulthood (2011: 70).

Bubolz (2001) considers family capital in an alternative way, through which families are the building blocks and source of understanding for principles of trust, reciprocity and exchange, and kinship structures:

Parent-child and sibling relationships are especially important in providing economic aid, help with tasks, personal and health care, and companionship to older adults. Cross-generational help, such as provision of child care by grandparents, is also significant (2001: 130).

This latter point is particularly applicable to families in developing countries, where family acts as a source of economic support in the absence of financial aid and infrastructures commonly present in developed countries, and allows parents to participate in the labour force (Mokomane, 2012). In relation to this thesis, it will be seen that kinship structures are especially relevant when discussing younger student-mothers, who often rely on family to undertake child-care responsibilities in their absence. Nevertheless, Bubolz also notes that families as independent units cannot always meet the needs of members, and consequently access other social systems such as community networks or religious groups, for example, for extra support (2001: 130).

Using literature concerning the psychological empowerment and subjective well-being (SWB) of individuals, it is possible to argue that family capital can act as a



resource for women in these regards. For example, Diener and Biswas-Diener define SWB as ‘people’s positive evaluations of their lives, including pleasant emotions, fulfillment, and life satisfaction’ (2005: 127). They state that psychological empowerment is one aspect of subjective well-being, through which people believe ‘they have the resources, energy, and competence to accomplish important goals’. It is also argued that psychological empowerment can accompany or follow other components of SWB, such as ‘positive affect’. Positive affect includes pleasant moods and positive emotions, which are argued to generate outcomes such as ‘sociability, self-confidence, leadership and dominance, flexible thinking, altruism, active engagement with the environment, and self-regulatory ability’. All these characteristics are in turn associated with psychological empowerment, and people feeling that they are capable of acting from within themselves to achieve their goals; alternatively referred to as ‘internal empowerment’.<sup>19</sup> It is believed that one key facet in the generation of subjective well-being is social relationships, such as with friends, family and partners/spouses. Such sources have the potential to foster positive emotions such as love, joy and happiness in an individual that can help lead to internal empowerment (2005: 127-128). When applied to women in particular, the social capital within families that Coleman described can act as a resource for this internal empowerment. This can be viewed through the relationship between daughters and their parents. As Aquilino argues:

The parent-child relationship provides a unique source of support and identity to children over the life span... They provide guidance, emotional support, and a “safe haven” for young adults in times of need... The parent-child relationship is of central importance to the psychological and material well-being of young adults (1994: 908-909).

In a similar vein, Wenk et al. state that the family, and more specifically parents, act as a source of long-term well-being for individuals, because it is through the involvement of parents with their children at an early age that positive relationships can be developed. This in turn means that as adult children, ‘positive relationships with parents reduce psychological distress’ (1994: 229). Nonetheless:

The basis for well-being is different for girls and boys because they seek substantively different kinds of approval from parents... Girls tend to gain their sense of worth from a sense of social and moral acceptability. The

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<sup>19</sup> This perspective can be correlated with the ideas of Stromquist (1995) and Rowlands (1997) over psychological and personal empowerment.

perception of feeling loved and close to parents and the desire to be like parents are likely to be particularly important for girls' self-worth (1994: 230).

In a study that specifically focused on the adult daughter-parent relationships, Barnett et al. reported that when women had good relationships with their parents, mothers and fathers alike, high levels of well-being were reported; '...multiple-role involvement [of parents] nourishes women's subjective well-being, because each role provides an independent source of positive experience' (1991: 39).

The above, arguably, seems dependent on the family unit acting as a whole, with both parents present. What, however, happens when a parent is absent? This is a pertinent question in this thesis, as a significant issue that arises for many participants is the absence of either a father or a husband, usually due to death or migration. As Mokomane asserts, the absence of fathers has the potential to undermine levels of psychological and cognitive empowerment for individuals (2012: 8). Yet a counter argument to this is the suggestion that mothers are 'the most important figure in the child's life', and that girls frequently focus on their mothers as a role model in particular (Baruch and Barnett, 1983: 601). This is possibly due to the idea that mothers generate the initial space in which one first forms an identity and understands their place in society (Arendell, 2000). Shrier et al. argue that there are:

...specific and somewhat unique characteristics to mother-daughter relationships... The relationship is of two individuals of the same gender and, for some mothers and daughters, can be emotionally intense and sometimes highly ambivalent. As part of the developmental process, there may be elements of fusion or strong feelings of attachment, connection, mutuality, as well as increasing psychological separation and autonomy (2004: 94).

From a feminist perspective, a link has been made between female empowerment and motherhood via the 'mother-daughter bond', in which feminists have believed that a strong connection between mothers and daughters can generate a 'strong female self' (O'Reilly, 1998: 17). Consequently, the relationship between mothers and daughters, and the positive and empowering affects this bond can create for women, have become of key concern within scholarly work (Shrier et al., 2004).

Feminist writers from the 1970s onwards debated the mother-daughter dyad, questioning the extent to which it creates autonomy for young girls and female empowerment rather than estrangement (O'Reilly, 2000: 144-146). Nonetheless, it

has been argued that a mother's empowerment is important in both their lives and that of their daughters (Arcana, 1979; Rich, 1986). The mother-daughter connection 'empowers the daughters if and only if the mothers with whom daughters identify are themselves living lives of agency, authority, and autonomy' (O'Reilly, 2000: 146). In another study, Barnett et al. found that 'adult daughters' reports of positive relations with their mothers were significantly correlated with their reports of self-esteem and "pleasure", that is, overall happiness, life satisfaction, and optimism' (1991: 29-30). Likewise, during research with rural women in Mexico, Zapata was told by one of her informants that 'when mothers and daughters share a close relationship, they can build "power with"' (1999: 93). It can thus be argued that the bond between mothers and daughters can be explored through the lens of family capital, and can act as a potential resource and "pre-condition" of empowerment for women.

### ***Resources + Agency = Capabilities = Outcomes***

In addition to resources, Kabeer notes how an individual requires *agency* to act as the "process" of empowerment, which is associated with the *power within* aspect of empowerment when exercised individually, or *power with* when used collectively (1999a: 438). Alsop and Norton define agency as 'an actors ability to make meaningful choices; that is the actor is able to envisage and purposively choose options' (2005: 4). According to Petesch et al.:

Individuals behave as *agents* when they can pursue purposeful courses of action that further their goals...The capacity to act as an agent implies that the actor is able to envision alternative paths of action, decide among them, and take action to advance the chosen path as an individual or collectively with others (2005: 42).

Thus, from this it can be deduced that agency also refers to *power to*, which Kabeer also references (1999a: 438). For Kabeer agency 'has both positive and negative meanings in relation to power':

In the positive sense of "power to", it refers to people's capacity to define their own life-choices and to pursue their own goals, even in the face of opposition, dissent and resistance from others. Agency can also be exercised in the more negative sense of "power over", where it implies the capacity of an actor or category of actors to impose their goals on others against their wishes (1999b: 4) .

Kabeer recognises that there are various forms of agency, yet the one most frequently referred to when considering the empowerment of women is agency in decision-making (1999a: 445).<sup>20</sup> Ibrahim and Alkire note that decision-making over differing facets of life is an important ‘indicator of power relations’, and from the perspective of a private domain particularly, it is ‘reflected through the division of gender roles within the household’ (2007: 389). As Kabeer purports, there are few cultures in which there is a ‘starkly dichotomized distribution of power’ in which men make all the decisions without women’s input (1999b: 18). She argues that it is more commonly found that there is a ‘hierarchy of decision-making responsibilities’ which is recognised by both the familial and communal context, where the capacity of men as the “heads of households” make certain decisions and women make others with their capacity as wives, mothers and daughters (1999b: 18).<sup>21</sup>

This is an interesting point to reflect on in relation to indigenous women in Cañar; as will be seen, many of the older research participants in particular can be considered as “female-heads of households” due to the absence of spouses. In most cases, they can be deemed as the centre of their agency in decision-making, unless their spouse has migrated and is still consulted when a decision needs to be made. Kabeer highlights that assessing agency in decision-making as a form of female empowerment needs to be considered carefully, as there is evidence to show how pre-existing gender divisions concerning roles and responsibilities already provide the space for women to participate in household decision-making (1999a: 446-447). Therefore, using agency as a tool for measuring empowerment in this context does not necessarily elucidate if women have gained power to make choices and decisions, as one is primarily required to consider the extent to which women were

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<sup>20</sup> Other forms of agency include deception and manipulation, bargaining and negotiation, subversion and resistance, in addition to ‘more intangible, cognitive processes of reflection and analysis’ (Kabeer, 1999b: 3).

<sup>21</sup> Deere and León consider the topic of decision-making, particularly over the control of agricultural inputs and outputs and organisation of labour, within Andean households of Colombia and Peru. They highlight how such decision-making structures were influenced by the class position of the household. For example, they found that 62 per cent of women from small-holder households were responsible for marketing activities, in contrast to eleven per cent of women in middle and rich peasant homes (1982: 99). Women considered this activity as an extension of household administration over consumption, buying new goods with proceeds from market sales, and not as a method of generating income. Equally, poorer households made financial decisions between the husband and wife, while finances were conducted by men in richer homes (1982: 100). In her study of Chanchaló in Andean Ecuador, Hamilton (1998) found women to be full-time farmers with full domestic decision-making participation in agricultural production with men.

denied to do so in the past. This is in addition to the types of choices women were able to make, such as outside the domestic sphere.

When combining resources and agency together, Kabeer (1999a: 438) suggests that these two components link to Amartya Sen's Capability Approach, which has been furthered by Martha Nussbaum in relation to women (see below). In essence, Sen refers to capability as reflecting a 'person's freedom to choose between different ways of living' (1990: 44). In his book *Development as Freedom* (1999), Sen associates the 'real freedoms that people can enjoy' with development, in which development advances freedoms (1999: 3). 'Unfreedoms' are elements that drive many theories of development:<sup>22</sup>

Despite unprecedented increases in overall opulence, the contemporary world denies elementary freedoms to vast numbers – perhaps even the majority – of people. Sometimes the lack of substantive freedoms relates directly to economic poverty, which robs people of the freedom to satisfy hunger, or to achieve sufficient nutrition, or to obtain remedies for treatable illnesses, or the opportunity to be adequately clothed or sheltered, or to enjoy clean water or sanitary facilities. In other cases, the unfreedom links closely to the lack of public facilities and social care, such as the absence of epidemiological programs, or of organized arrangements for health care or educational facilities, or of effective institutions for the maintenance of local peace and order. In still other cases, the violation of freedom results directly from a denial of political and civil liberties by authoritarian regimes and from imposed restrictions on the freedom to participate in the social, political and economic life of the community (1999: 3-4).

In essence, therefore, for Sen capability is derived from an individual's 'functioning', which is the 'achievement of a person: what he or she manages to do or to be' (Sen, 1990: 44). A person's functioning, however, and what it is possible for them to achieve, is influenced by 'economic opportunities, political liberties, social powers, and the enabling conditions of good health, basic education, and the encouragement and cultivation of initiatives' (1999: 5); i.e. freedom *resources*. At the same time, these freedom opportunities also require individuals to be the *agents* in exercising the freedom, through the 'liberty to participate in social choice and in the making of public decisions that impel the progress of these opportunities' (1999: 5). It is therefore possible to see how empowerment theories entailing *resources* and *agency* can link to the capability approach. Sen states that the framework:

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<sup>22</sup> Sen's Capability Approach became the underlying basis to the *Human Development Reports* of the UNDP (Nussbaum, 2000: 230).

... is based on a view of living as a combination of various “doings and beings”, with quality of life to be assessed in terms of the capability to achieve valuable functionings... Individuals may, however, differ a good deal from each other in the weights they attach to these different functionings – valuable though they may all be – and the assessment of individual and social advantages must be alive to these variations (1993: 31).<sup>23</sup>

Nussbaum takes Sen’s concept one-step further and analyses it vis-à-vis women. She states, ‘women in much of the world lack support for fundamental functions of a human life’ (2000: 219)(2000: 219). In this regard she refers to ‘functions’ as nutrition, health, security, literacy and education, work, political participation, legal recourse, imagination and cognition. A lack of access to, or encountering high levels of discrimination within, these functions causes inequalities that generate ‘unequal human capabilities’ in women (2000: 220). Further, given that gender inequalities are often connected to poverty, ‘when poverty combines with gender inequality, the result is acute failure of central human capabilities’ (2000: 221). In particular, inequalities in school enrolment, health, nutrition and mortality rates, care responsibilities and employment, as examples, cause women to ‘lack essential support for leading lives that are fully human... frequently caused by them being women’ (2000: 222). Consequently, using a feminist perspective, Nussbaum argues that there are basic ‘constitutional principles that should be respected and implemented by the governments of all nations, as a bare minimum of what respect for human dignity requires’ (2000: 222). Such a framework would involve focusing on ‘human capabilities’. The human capabilities framework here refers to ‘what people are actually able to do and to be’ (2000: 222), underscored by the idea that human beings deserve a dignified life, in which each person is significant and should not be used as ‘mere tools’ towards meeting the needs of others. In relation to women, Nussbaum argues that they have ‘all too often been treated as the supporters of the ends of others, rather than as ends in their own right; thus, this principle has particular critical force with regard to women’s lives’ (2000: 223). In

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<sup>23</sup> Sen’s ideas are wide-ranging and have acquired the attention of many scholars in analysis, criticism and expansion of his theories. In particular, Kumar Giri (2000) notes the lack of focus paid to the self-development of an individual, especially in Sen’s concept of capability; it ‘does not embody the seeking and quest for being, becoming, self-development and self-realization on the part of actors’ (2000: 1004). Consequently therefore, other elements that relate to theories of empowerment are absent here.

this light, the approach can be directly linked to women's empowerment in developing nations.

Considering the issues associated with cross-cultural understandings over theories, diversity and paternalism within international development policy that is set by the 'West' (2000: 224-226), Nussbaum suggests that once opportunities are secured for people, it should be they that 'determine their course in life' (2000: 227):

... when we use a set of cross-cultural norms as benchmarks for the world's various societies, we show too little respect for people's freedom as agents. People are best judges of what is good for them and, if we say that their own choices are not good for them, we treat them like children (2000: 226).

Thus the 'human capabilities' framework focuses on empowerment via opportunity and choice. The method also moves away from prior traditional economic approaches to development that concentrate on a nation's GNP per capita to measure quality of life. The latter do not indicate how women are doing or what the government has done for them, and thus there is a need to look closer at aspects of women's lives to assess this (2000: 228). Likewise, preference-based approaches that consider and assess the role of economic resources in improving lives only 'ask them about the satisfaction of their current preferences', which have ultimately been influenced by external socioeconomic conditions (2000: 229). The risk here is that such approaches to measuring development do not consider the fact that inequalities entrenched in social norms can be reinforced in people's perceptions. They may have been:

... socialized to believe that a lower living standard is what is right and fitting for them, and that some great human goods (for example, education, political participation) are not for them. They may be under considerable pressure to say they are satisfied without such things (2000: 229).

Consequently, this approach asks what women are able to do and be, rather than ask how satisfied they are or what resources they are able to control (2000: 230). Nussbaum presents a list of "central human functional capabilities", which aims to deliver a structure for assessing quality of life, but remains open-ended and can be altered and challenged dependent on the context (2000: 231-233).<sup>24</sup> It is noted that in order to achieve capabilities such as social affiliation and practical reasoning, the individual not only needs to be internally ready to act, but the environment needs to

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<sup>24</sup> This list includes: Life, Bodily Health, Bodily Integrity, Senses, Imagination and Thought, Emotions, Practical Reason, Affiliation, Other species, Play, Control over environment.

be appropriately developed in order for capabilities to function (2000: 235). For example, in order for a woman to know how to socialise with others and be capable of affiliation, such an example needs to have been nurtured during childhood. This example can, in turn, be argued to relate back to the notion and resource of family capital, discussed earlier.

### ***Concluding statement***

In summary, following on from Kabeer: if resources are available to act as a pre-condition of empowerment and the contextual environment allows them to be accessed, if individuals are able to act as agents in making choice to access the resources available as a consequence of developing *power within* or *power with*, then their capabilities can be generated and function (as *power to*) to achieve an empowering outcome in their lives. This idea also ultimately encompasses the psychological and cognitive dimensions of empowerment to take place, which subsequently allow the economic and/or political aspects to be developed. Within this, it is clear that education, regardless of kind, is considered a key element of the process, in addition to interaction with social actors; be it family members, women's organisations, or local community.



**Table 5: Word Glossary associated with Empowerment**

Word Glossary associated with Empowerment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ (subjective) Well-being</li> <li>✓ Removing obstacles = creating change</li> <li>✓ Private / Public spaces</li> <li>✓ Participation</li> <li>✓ Access to decision-making</li> <li>✓ Socioeconomic, cultural and political structures</li> <li>✓ Sharing power and responsibility</li> <li>✓ Realisation of human rights</li> <li>✓ Freedom of women</li> <li>✓ Process</li> <li>✓ Enhancing abilities to challenge</li> <li>✓ Increasing feelings of: self-efficacy, confidence, esteem</li> <li>✓ Gaining <i>power to</i> overcome inequality</li> <li>✓ Social transformation</li> <li>✓ Choice</li> <li>✓ Realising opportunities and potential</li> <li>✓ Knowledge and conscientization</li> <li>✓ Community action</li> <li>✓ Social action</li> <li>✓ Collective power</li> <li>✓ Capacity building</li> <li>✓ Capability</li> <li>✓ Assertiveness</li> <li>✓ Autonomy</li> <li>✓ Self-belief to accomplish goals</li> <li>✓ Critical consciousness</li> <li>✓ Agency</li> <li>✓ Social networks</li> </ul>

## Chapter III

# Negotiating the “Messiness” of Research in Cross-cultural Settings

“You are taking it away to faraway places. That’s the only reason you’re asking me, taking photos...”<sup>25</sup>

The above quote comes from an interview I conducted with an elder Cañari woman in response to the question: ‘what do you think of foreign people who come and ask you questions and take photos?’ Mama Shulla was sat on a tree stump outside her adobe built home, cattle grazing in the field below us, as her granddaughter Koya acted as a ‘cultural broker’ between us.<sup>26</sup> Koya helped me explain to her grandmother the reason for my presence, following which Mama Shulla verbally agreed to be interviewed. Interchanging between Quichua and Spanish, with the help of Koya’s translation, Mama Shulla recounted stories of the hacienda period in Cañar and reflected on how things had changed in Cañari culture over the years following agrarian reform. During the two hours I spent with Mama Shulla in the sunshine, many significant issues were raised that connect with the reality of conducting qualitative research in cross-cultural settings, such as: the dilemma of language differences, the fear and suspicion of “outsiders” and foreign researchers, the significance of gatekeepers, and establishing trust with informants.

Scholars working within the sphere of research methodology in academia have recently begun to highlight how fieldwork and research can often be a ‘messy’ process, accompanied by an array of challenges (Bryman, 2012; Letherby, 2003; Townsend and Burgess, 2009a; Waddington and Smith, 2014). This can be particularly relevant when conducting research in countries and cultures different to your own (Billo and Hiemstra, 2013; Binns, 2006; Harzing et al., 2013; Liamputtong, 2010; Noroña, 2007; Rubinstein-Ávila, 2013). The purpose of this chapter is to outline features concerned with the epistemological and ontological facets of the research. Moreover, it discusses a number of issues that were encountered as part of

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<sup>25</sup> *Para otras tierras lejanas estás llevando. Para eso me ha de preguntar, me tomó fotos.* Interview: Cañar, Mama Shulla, 16 July 2011.

<sup>26</sup> All participant names referred to in this thesis, with the exception of Judy Blankenship, are pseudonyms.

fieldwork, which instigated a reevaluation of the research methodology and questions.

Firstly, the motivations and reasons for choosing the specific location for the fieldwork are provided. Thereafter, the original aims of the research and the chosen paradigm, approaches and data collection methods that were initially selected to underlie the study are established. In turn, the purpose of language and cultural preparation that I undertook at the beginning of the fieldwork is also reflected on. Likewise, I consider in detail how the early stages of fieldwork, and associated challenges that were faced, required my continued flexibility and reflexivity. This ultimately resulted in an alteration of the research questions and data collection methods. As such, the chapter highlights an example of ‘messiness’ in conducting real-life research. It discusses important aspects of the fieldwork process, including how I gained access to communities, ethical considerations and obtaining consent from individuals, in addition to how I established trust and mutual understanding with people. Finally, reference is made to the analysis of data and the interpretation and dissemination of findings, which are of subsequent focus in Chapter IV, V and VI.

### ***3.1 The Research Location, Philosophical Approach and Research Methods***

#### ***Choosing the Research Location***

The decision to base this study in the southern Andes of Ecuador originates primarily from previous experiences in the region during 2003-2004. As a gap-year volunteer prior to undergraduate study, I lived and worked in the province of Azuay, which provided me with my first experience of living in Latin America. Above all, however, as a consequence of travel in the country, and particularly in rural areas around the provinces of Azuay and Cañar, I began to observe the different cultural elements and gained an interest in indigenous identity and culture.

When I later spent a year conducting research in Costa Rica concerning gender equality and fair-trade coffee cooperatives (2006-2007), I was acutely aware of the lack of ‘indigenous’ culture in this Latin American country and yearned to return to the Andes. Further, through my research in Costa Rica, the question of female empowerment and what it means in different cultural contexts arose, and I

began to think about how such a concept existed within an indigenous cultural framework. My main questions were: To what extent is there a concept of female empowerment within Andean indigenous communities? How do indigenous women in the Andes understand and interpret the concept of ‘empowerment’?

I subsequently made the decision to undertake graduate study, with the topic of female empowerment and indigenous women in the Andes being of key focus. I wished to explore the ontologies of women’s life experiences, understandings, interpretations and opinions in order to question what ‘empowerment’ meant to them. Fundamentally, I wanted to know if the notion of female empowerment, as constructed by the West and used by international development organisations, bore any relevance to their lives. I did not wish to test a particular hypothesis, but simply ask indigenous women to talk about their experiences and understandings of the world, with specific relation to the matter of ‘power’ as constructed by themselves.

Carrying out an extensive literature search on Andean indigenous communities, women and gender relations, I found that the majority of past research carried out on these matters had either been focused in the northern provinces of Ecuador or in other Andean countries such as Peru and Bolivia. Studies located in the southern provinces of Cañar, Azuay and Loja in Ecuador had mostly been dedicated to the issue of male and female migration from within indigenous communities and rural areas towards urban spaces across Ecuador, and international cities such as New York and Madrid. The impact of migration upon smallholder agriculture (Gray, 2009; Jokisch, 2002) and gender relations inside households and communities left behind had been considered (Kyle, 2000; Pribilsky, 2001, 2004, 2007). Yet I could find very little written specifically concerned with indigenous women’s life experiences in the provinces of Azuay and Cañar. Taking this point into consideration, alongside the fact I already had a number of connections previously made in this region to act as potential ‘gatekeepers’, both the academic and logistical aspects of the proposed research pointed me back towards the Andes of Azuay and Cañar in Ecuador.

### ***Proposed Research Design and Methodology***

When this research was first designed, it proposed to employ a qualitative research paradigm. The following box demonstrates features of qualitative researchers.

### Qualitative Researchers Are:

- ✓ Concerned with **Process**
- ✓ Interested in **Meaning**: they ask how people make sense of their lives, experience and world structures
- ✓ The **Primary (human) Instrument** for data collection and analysis
- ✓ **Fieldworkers**: they observe or record people, settings, sites or institutions in their natural state
- ✓ **Inductive**: they build abstractions, concepts, hypotheses and theories from details

**Table 6: Assumptions of Qualitative Designs.** Adapted from Creswell (1994: 145).

Given the ontological components highlighted previously that were identified as being the key sources of reality for investigation in this study, a quantitative design would not have been appropriate. This was due to the need to carry out interviews, focus groups or life histories as the principal methods of data collection, in order to obtain data that reflected the subjective reality of participants (Creswell, 1994: 5). Quantitative research heavily relies on survey data, statistics, or questionnaires, which would fail to meet the needs of the respective ontological elements. Nonetheless, referring to the most recent agricultural census would provide useful background information.

Within this qualitative paradigm, the research wished to ensue a multi-method study that combined interpretivism and flexible exploration with phenomenological underpinnings for studying “lifeworld” human experience’ (D. E. Gray, 2009: 24). As qualitative research is commonly multi-method in its focus, it was foreseen that the triangulation of several methods would be carried out in order to facilitate ‘an indepth understanding of the phenomena in question’ (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998: 4). As Denzin and Lincoln suggest, by carrying out a study that uses a strategy that combines multiple methods, perspectives and empirical materials, the investigation is given ‘rigor, breadth and depth’ (1998: 4).

Firstly, an interpretivist approach views ‘people, and their interpretations, perceptions, meanings and understandings, as the primary data source’ (Mason, 2002: 56). Further, this approach creates an “insider view” as a consequence of focusing on the individual experience and perceptions of participants (Mason, 2002:

56). Within this framework, phenomenology ‘holds that any attempt to understand social reality has to be grounded in people’s experiences’ (D. E. Gray, 2009: 22). As Malhotra Bentz and Shapiro state, the root of phenomenology is to ‘provide a description of human experience as it is experienced by the person herself’ (1998: 96), through which there is an assumption that ‘the important reality is what people perceive it to be’ (Kvale, 1996: 52). Phenomenology attempts to ‘grasp the qualitative diversity of their experiences [of the individual] and to explicate their essential meanings [of experience]’ (Kvale, 1996: 53). Rudestam and Newton outline that phenomenological orientated researchers should hold the skills of ‘listening, observing and forming an empathic alliance with the subject’, besides remaining ‘watchful of themes that are presented’ (1992: 33). Further, as Crotty (1998: 78) highlights, it is necessary for the researcher to ‘lay aside’ preconceived assumptions about a particular phenomenon under study, so that the phenomena can “‘speak for themselves”, unaltered by our perceptions’ (D. E. Gray, 2009: 22). Thus, the ontological facets of the proposed research (especially that of women’s experience) and the subjective realities of individuals who became research participants were considered to connect with aspects of phenomenological enquiry. The underlying philosophical principles of phenomenology were therefore considered appropriate as part of the research design.

Equally, phenomenological methods of data collection are observed to be ‘relatively unstructured’ (D. E. Gray, 2009: 28) as the process is inductive.<sup>27</sup> Gray states that studies using elements of phenomenology ‘are more likely to pick up factors that were not part of the original research focus’, can produce ‘thick descriptions of people’s experiences or perspectives within their natural settings’, and are often based upon several small case studies (2009: 28).

In this particular research, while employing this interpretive perspective, I wished to use an exploratory model of data collection to do so. This is because, although I had an understanding of ‘empowerment’ discourse from within Western academic circles, I wanted to investigate if it was a phenomenon that was existent or

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<sup>27</sup> According to Brewer induction is ‘an approach in social research which argues that empirical generalisations and theoretical statements should be derived from the data. It is the inverse of deduction, in which hypotheses are derived from theory and then tested against data. Induction is associated with qualitative research and naturalism, where the intent is to be “true to the data themselves”, allowing the data “to speak for themselves”’ (2003: 155).

relevant in an indigenous context. Exploration is therefore useful ‘when not enough is known about a phenomena’ (D. E. Gray, 2009: 35). Robson (2002: 59) highlights that the purpose of exploratory research is to seek new insights, to ask questions, and to assess phenomena in a new light with the possibility of generating ideas and hypotheses for future research. Moreover, Stebbins purports that exploratory research occurs when:

... there is little or no scientific knowledge about the group, process, activity or situation they want to examine but nevertheless believe it contains elements worth discovering. To explore effectively a given phenomenon, [researchers] must approach it with two special orientations: *flexibility* in looking for data and *open-mindedness* about where to find them... (2001: 6).

In developing an exploratory study, therefore, flexibility in the design of the research is allowed for (Robson, 2002: 59). By employing a flexible design, the specific identification of whom and from where participants will be sampled from is not called for prior to the commencement of research (Robson, 2002: 165). Thus I identified a broad location to base this study in, yet specific participants were to be identified as the study developed via ‘snowball sampling’. This is a technique often used when ‘working with populations that are not easily...accessed... You begin by identifying someone from the population who is willing to be in your study. You then ask them to identify others...’ (O’Leary, 2004: 110). Equally, Reiter argues that ‘exploratory research needs to be conducted in a transparent, honest, and self-reflexive way’, in addition to a ‘willingness and ability to expose oneself to foreign cultures and languages as well as the courage to engage in critical and honest self reflection and critique’ (2013: 1). He consequently notes the need for recognising the role of the researcher in the questions we ask in our research and as the research unfolds:

... research cannot start from nowhere. Who we are, our interests, backgrounds, training, and culture - influence what questions we ask, how we ask them, and even what we accept as confirming evidence. Our approach to knowledge is “situated”, and the worst we can do is to pretend that it is not (2013: 3).

Reiter therefore argues that ‘confirmatory research’ – i.e. deductive research that tests hypothesis – neglects the consideration of bias that contributes to the formulation of theories and hypothesis. He also states that exploratory research allows for the recognition that:

... all inquiry is tentative; that reality is, in part, socially constructed; that researchers are part of the reality they analyze; and that the words and categories we use to explain reality grow out of our own minds and not out of reality. In other words, what we perceive and how we perceive it has more to do with us than with the reality we observe (2013: 5).

Reiter consequently highlights some important points to be aware of when undertaking research of this nature, such as reflexivity, in addition to the impact of the researcher on the analysis and writing up of data after collection.

By employing exploration as part of the framework to this study, flexibility was also allowed for in the data collection methods (Robson, 2002).<sup>28</sup> Within both phenomenological and exploratory research, interviews are a principal method of data collection. Creswell (2007: 61) notes that in-depth and multiple interviews with participants are key to phenomenological studies, while Stebbins suggests the use of an interview-guide can be useful once some general exploratory observations have been made (2001). Using a guide for in-depth interviews intends to combine structure with flexibility. As Legard et al. (2005) suggest, in-depth interviews involve the use of a topic guide, which sets out key issues and topics to be discussed during the interview. Yet the structure of the interview is 'sufficiently flexible to permit topics to be covered in the order most suited to the interviewee, to allow responses to be fully probed and explored and to allow the researcher to be responsive to relevant issues raised spontaneously by the interviewee' (2005: 141). Flexibility in the research design also permits researchers to create tentative questions, which may alter as the research progresses and develops (Robson, 2002: 165). Thus, at the start, a number of questions were formulated that would be used in the fieldwork context to help facilitate the exploratory enquiry. For example:

How do indigenous women identify with the term 'power'?  
What experiences do they describe that connect with the obtainment of 'power' from their perspective?

Dependent on how they relate to the term 'power', are there any aspects of their lives in which indigenous women feel they do not have 'power'?  
What do they feel is required to achieve a change and in obtaining it?

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<sup>28</sup> This in turn reflects the concept of bricolage, as described by Lincoln and Denzin (1994), following Lévi-Strauss's (1966) idea of the bricoleur. The bricoleur is a 'Jack of all trades or a kind of professional do-it-yourself person' (Lévi-Strauss, 1966: 17), who creates a bricolage. The bricolage is a 'pieced together, close-knit set of practices that provide solutions to a problem' (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994: 2); when applied to qualitative research, it can be a 'choice of practice, [which] is pragmatic, strategic and self-reflexive' (Nelson et al., 1992: 2).



How do women respond to the term 'empowerment'?  
Can they identify any personal experiences that they associate with the term 'empowerment'?

In order to help elicit data in response to these questions, the following are examples of questions that were to help guide in-depth interviews:

What is 'power' to you?

Do you feel you have 'power' of this kind?

Are there any experiences that you feel demonstrate this 'power'?

Are there any experiences that you feel demonstrate that you don't have this power?

How do you think your 'power' could be increased?

Can you describe what the word 'empowerment' means to you?

By using open-ended questions such as these, the aim was to create a space in which participants were also given freedom to guide the conversation. In doing so, it was hoped that participants would be able to discuss and express feelings and experiences concerning various aspects of their lived realities that appeared relevant to themselves as individuals, as part of their response to the questions. A very structured interview, using predominantly closed questions, would not allow this to occur.<sup>29</sup>

Likewise, the life history method of data collection was believed to be possibly applicable to this research, but was likely to become clearer once particular research participants had been identified and in-depth interviews had been carried out. Denscombe describes this method as portraying 'the lives of specific people, to map how their experiences change over time, and to link these experiences with the cultural, social or historical context in which they occur' (2007: 64). As such, the use of life history in this research would aim to maintain the interpretivist framework, as it allows an individual's 'reflection on their life' to form the basis of an account that 'enables the reader to see things through the eyes of the person' (Denscombe, 2007:

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<sup>29</sup> Given the nature of in-depth interviewing, it was not possible to state the exact length of each interview prior to fieldwork, as it would likely depend on the individual participant concerned and the type of interaction held with the researcher. However, it was approximated that each interview would take around one hour. If I subsequently felt that further discussion was needed with the participant, then this would be identified and arranged later.

64). Past experiences in women's lives, or cultural or socioeconomic factors, might contribute to understandings of "power" and "empowerment", thus conducting life histories with a number of participants was considered a useful method in exploring these issues if they began to arise within interviews.

### ***Ethical Considerations***

The ethical matters in this research were participant consent, avoiding deception and sustaining privacy and confidentiality of information. Prior to fieldwork, a consent form was written in Spanish that explained the purpose of the research and the meaning of an individual's participation, how the data would be used and kept anonymous, and the potential outcomes of the research. In the field, participants would be asked permission to be recorded, and explained to that their involvement was completely voluntary, and they could stop the interview (and/or recorder if applicable) at any time. In cases where a participant was illiterate, I would read the consent form to them, and subsequently clarify that the person had fully understood. Individuals would then be asked to mark the consent form however they wished as a method of signature.

To check the appropriateness of the wording on the sheet for those of low educational or literacy levels, I planned to obtain advice from gatekeepers in Ecuador first, as to whether they suggested the sheet be augmented and simplified for these situations. My intention was to make the individual feel comfortable as easily as possible. If the information I presented seemed too complicated, this ran the risk of them feeling inadequate to participate. Further, it was important to avoid creating deception on my part with participants over the purpose of the research.

The study did not propose to seek consent from a research advocate on behalf of anyone unable to give informed consent, as the research was not to involve children or vulnerable adults. In a case where communication was difficult due to language differences, such as using Quichua rather than Spanish, a translator was to be used. In these cases, the consent form would be translated into the language used by the participant by the translator, and the same process as above was to be used if the participant was illiterate. Further, a signed contract was to be established with the translator, within which it would be stipulated that they keep any information given by a participant confidential.

Likewise, participants were to be told that their names would remain anonymous if their words were subsequently used as part of the thesis, and that information they provided would not be repeated to other participants. Interviews would be carried out in private or out of earshot of others, in a place convenient to participants, but without causing vulnerability to myself. If data were collected via focus groups, participants would be informed their involvement was voluntary, that any of their words used would be made anonymous, and that they should only share what they wished to share with the group. This is because I had no control over what participants did with what they heard subsequently.

### ***3.2 Into the Field: The “Messiness” of Fieldwork***

#### ***Being an “Outsider” in a Foreign World: The need to understand***

As I was preparing to carry out fieldwork, one key issue that was at the forefront of my mind was the matter of being a young female westerner aiming to undertake research in a non-western and predominantly patriarchal culture. From previous experiences that I had had in Latin America, both as a “tourist” and “resident”, I was acutely aware of not only my own vulnerability but also that of “natives”.<sup>30</sup> Early on during my first trip to Latin America in 2003 I had fallen into the trap of seeing indigenous culture as ‘exotic’ and ‘folkloric’, and indigenous women’s dress especially, as a subject matter for photographs because it was “different” and of “interest to people back home”. Over time, however, my initial naivety disappeared, and I began to think about this particular example from a different perspective: how would I feel if someone were taking pictures of me because I was dressed “differently”, and I don’t know what happens to the pictures later? Not only does

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<sup>30</sup> When I refer to my own vulnerability here, I mean the risks associated with being a young female westerner present in a country different to my own, and in the developing world moreover. For example: personal security; people’s assumptions of me, such as over social status and wealth; being taken advantage of; differences in language causing misunderstandings in multiple ways.

During the fieldwork, on occasions my husband accompanied me from Cuenca to various field locations, especially during public celebrations or social events. In doing so, his presence in these places was significant to me in helping provide a visual aid to locals that showed that I was a) not alone, and b) that I was married. Being blonde, blue-eyed and fair skinned, I do not hide well in social gatherings in Latin America and thus often gain significant attention, particularly through ‘*hola gringa*’s, stares and hisses from men. My partner’s presence particularly reduced the verbal male attention I received, and also gave me a greater sense of security during the latter stages of research when I was pregnant.

this case in point throw up the subject of ethics, but also the presence of people in a world foreign to their own, and their role and purpose in it.

Academics working in cross-cultural settings have paid significant attention to the matter of being an “outsider” to a culture, and principally in relation to conducting qualitative research. Smith reflects on the role of ethnographers in indigenous contexts, stating that ‘anthropologists are often the academics popularly perceived by the indigenous world as the epitome of all that is bad with academics’ (2008: 67). This is supported by Trask, who states:

To Native peoples, anthropology is based on a peculiarly Western belief that studying books and learning to do fieldwork bequeaths a right to go halfway around the world to live with, observe, and write about another people. Moreover, this exploitation of a people’s hospitality and generosity does not carry with any responsibility of repayment in kind, or of privilege and privacy... the anthropologist is a taker and user (1999: 127).

This has not only been attributed to anthropologists, however, but Western researchers in general:

Despite [the] knowledge that they pass on to researchers, native people have often not been respected by outside researchers. This has resulted in negative experiences and resentment among local people in many parts of the world (Liamputtong, 2010: 59).

Consequently, therefore, researchers operating within indigenous environments have come to realise the necessity of employing ‘culturally sensitive and empathetic approaches which take into consideration the issues and problems which are important for the people who are being “researched”’ (Liamputtong, 2010: 3). Equally, Liamputtong highlights the crucial requirement for researchers to ensure ‘that their research is conducted ethically and that they take into account the cultural integrity of the participants’ (Liamputtong, 2010: 4). As Smith purports, indigenous communities themselves perceive the performance of ethical research with indigenous people as:

...establishing, maintaining and nurturing reciprocal and respectful relationships... The abilities to enter preexisting relationships... and to strengthen connectivity are important research skills in the indigenous arena. They require critical sensitivity and reciprocity of spirit by a researcher (2005: 97).

At the same time, researchers in this context ‘must be self aware of their position within the relationship and aware of their need for engagement in power-sharing

processes' (Smith, 2005: 97). A key way believed to help overcome some of the issues that are associated with Western researchers in indigenous communities is through 'giving back to the community' (Kovach, 2009: 149). Yet within this idea of "giving back", relevancy is highly important and it is necessary to ensure that the research topic and the results of data collection can be useful to the community later (Kovach, 2009). It was for this reason that I wished to focus on the topic of empowerment and its relevance to indigenous women in the Andes, as I envisaged developing suggestions for future research on this topic and how it can be advanced further by engaging with indigenous women themselves first, prior to developing projects concerned with women's empowerment.

Bearing in mind the multitude of considerations and challenges that can be generated by conducting research in indigenous settings, it was very important to me to become better aware of cultural and linguistic issues that I could encounter in my research. As a consequence, I investigated the possibility of doing a Quichua course upon arrival in Ecuador, in Cuenca, via the Centre for Inter-American Studies (CEDEI). Cuenca is the third largest city in Ecuador, the administrative and commercial centre of Azuay province, and the city that I lived in during fieldwork.<sup>31</sup> My logic behind studying Quichua was that I wanted to gain some knowledge of the mother tongue spoken by people in areas I foresaw conducting fieldwork. Whilst many individuals of younger generations in indigenous communities in the southern provinces of the Ecuadorian Andes no longer use Quichua as their principal language, and use Spanish instead, Quichua is nonetheless becoming revived through inter-cultural bilingual education. Further, it is often elder indigenous women who do not speak as much Spanish as the younger generations (Hurtado, 2010). My knowledge of Spanish is good, meaning that I would not require the aid of a translator in the majority of my data collection. By learning some basic Quichua, however, my aim was to demonstrate my desire to better engage with my

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<sup>31</sup> The reason for living in Cuenca was based on several factors. Firstly, Cuenca is a hub for bus networks, and serves as an access point to most other parts of Ecuador, especially to the areas in the southern provinces of Azuay and Cañar. It also has an airport meaning travelling longer distances, such as to Quito, is much easier and shorter than road travel. Secondly, having previously had connection with Cuenca, I knew the city and its infrastructure well, particularly in terms of options for living accommodation and access to other services such as Internet/phone communications, hospitals and banks. This meant that I could establish myself quickly without having to become orientated in a completely unknown place at the start. Further, being in Cuenca also meant that access to potential research gatekeepers, such as NGOs, was easier than it could have been, had I been located elsewhere.

participants in communities. In doing so my intention was to attempt to break part of the cultural barrier between indigenous people and myself, and I hoped this would help establish rapport with individuals; particularly with women.

In addition to the linguistic teaching I received from David, my Quichua teacher, I also learnt a lot about different aspects of indigenous culture through my language learning. It became clear to me very quickly that it was impossible to detach the Quichua language from indigenous cultural concepts and cosmology, and I valued having someone who was so knowledgeable to explain various theories that I had come across in my prior reading in a deeper and more analytical way.<sup>32</sup> Equally, David appeared very respectful of the study that I was proposing to carry out, and he appreciated that I was attempting to understand indigenous people for who they were and how they perceive the world as individuals, without trying to impose my own ideas, biases and culture on to them. I was able to talk over my proposed interview questions with David, who helped me formulate alternative versions of questions, or suggested more appropriate words to use, which might be more easily understood by illiterates or people of a lower educational level than others. This was invaluable advice that came from an indigenous perspective.

### ***Gaining Access to Participants: Negotiating agendas and power***

While undertaking Quichua lessons in the afternoons during the first two months, I also began to establish links with organisations and individuals that could act as potential ‘gatekeepers’, ‘cultural brokers’ or direct research participants. Liamputtong highlights how ‘gaining access to any research participant can often be problematic. It is even more so when attempts are made to recruit participants in cross-cultural research... because of language and cultural differences’ (2010: 58-59). This also reflects the issues highlighted above concerning the fear and suspicion over outside researchers on the part of indigenous people. Liamputtong refers to ‘stakeholders’ as a possible avenue to gain access, such as organisations or groups that ‘have an interest in the particular community’ (2010: 61). Further, as Brydon (2006) suggests, universities and NGOs can often provide useful contacts in proposed research settings.

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<sup>32</sup> This included topics such as conceptualising gender in cosmological thought, how the indigenous world considers ‘human rights’, and the impact of migration and/or the loss of a partner due to other reasons.

I was already aware of one Cuenca-based NGO that worked specifically on gender related topics in rural communities. Through a connection at CEDEI, I made contact with this organisation and explained my research. They suggested I work on a project with them in conjunction with a town Municipality in Cañar province called 'Weaving Rights'. Through workshops with women from indigenous communities surrounding the town, women were not only taught how to weave, but also about women's rights. The ultimate aim was to 'strengthen' indigenous women and create a women's organisation. While initially I was not fully versed in what my role would be within the project, I felt that this NGO could act as a helpful gatekeeper into indigenous communities. It might provide me with an opportunity to establish relationships in the villages that could be developed later as part of my research. Equally, I thought that it might give me an insight into how a local Ecuadorian non-profit organisation functioned, which could provide useful data to be reflected upon later in relation to development projects concerned with gender issues and female empowerment. However, as I began to understand what the 'Weaving Rights' project entailed better, and what the expectations of my involvement in it were, I in fact became increasingly wary of my participation.

The NGO wanted me to be in charge of facilitating and teaching women in the workshops about topics contained within teaching modules that had been produced by the former National Women's Council (CONAMU) and other development orientated institutions.<sup>33</sup> These modules focused on gender debates within Western discourse, feminist leadership, and women's human rights (CONAMU et al., 2009). When I first skimmed through the module outlines they appeared to be written from a middle-class feminist perspective, which contrasted significantly with the ethnic and class background of those participating in the weaving workshops. I therefore began to question how these modules were applicable to women in indigenous communities and how women would respond to the content laid out. I also began to wonder how the women would view me if I began to talk about such subjects, particularly without any significant knowledge of who I was prior to my presence as a white western woman in the town. This all fed into ethical questions concerning the relationship of power between "researchers"

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<sup>33</sup> The former Consejo Nacional de las Mujeres (CONAMU) is now known as the Transition Committee for the Definition of Public Institutions to ensure Equality between Women and Men (Comisión de Transición hacia el Consejo de Igualdad de Género).

and the “researched”, which can often be generated during fieldwork. As Binns comments, ‘the coming together of the relatively rich “researcher” with the relatively poor “respondent” does undoubtedly raise many questions about “power” and “positionality”’ (2006: 13-14). My “positionality” from the outset in this project was complicated, both within the structure of the NGO and in the communities. I anticipated that the women would likely make assumptions about me based on my nationality, which would potentially be further influenced by the function I was undertaking in the NGO by bringing these modules into their villages. In this regard, a negative power dynamic between workshop participants and myself risked being created, which would potentially undermine my role. I therefore began to question the ethics of my involvement in this particular project, in addition to the extent to which this would provide viable access into the communities at a later date if I were to have already “contaminated” the setting beforehand.

Discussing my concerns with the NGO project leader, I was told that I needed to fit the module content to an indigenous context, focusing on the topics of female leadership and women’s rights. The NGO worker told me that the communities that I would be working in had not had any previous involvement with outside organisations. She also acknowledged that the modules were written for a more urban, white-*mestiza* population group with a western approach to gender and feminism. I was thankful that she recognised this but it reinforced some of my concerns. Being asked to fit the content to an indigenous setting seemed relatively imperialistic, when I myself was not indigenous, and further, assuming that I could carry out such a task in turn seemed quite presumptuous. The NGO worker had told me that the organisation tried to work with people in rural communities from the participants’ perspectives and ways of understanding the world, and that one of the biggest challenges for outside people working in rural areas was to reinforce indigenous philosophies. Consequently, I concluded that the organisation must have significant knowledge of indigenous culture, customs and etiquettes. She later told me, however, that she did not expect to see a *change* in women’s mentality overnight, but if we could ‘just establish a *change* in the women’s *sensibilidad* - perception - [through the use of the module contents] which would start a new process, then that would be good enough’. I found these two latter statements contradictory, as infiltrating teachings of such topics into an indigenous setting was attempting to



alter women's perspectives and understandings of social processes, not work with them. Further, not only had I been asked to *fit* a western agenda *to* an indigenous culture, but also I was indirectly being asked to *use* a western agenda *in* an indigenous setting. These two concepts were entirely different, yet both were seemingly "top-down" in nature. This also made me question the role of external, non-indigenous organisations, such as development NGOs, working in indigenous communities. What impacts do they, and the associated approaches that they employ in their projects, have upon the communities themselves in the long term? Are they always fully aware of the cultural characteristics of places they work in if they are not 'native' to the community, and are they aware of the potential power dynamics at play between community members and NGO employees within such situations?

As I grappled with the task ahead, I used the Documentation Centre within the NGO as a source of aid. I was, however, bemused at the lack of literature it contained regarding Andean culture, and more specifically, on philosophical concepts related to gender relations, women's position in society, and collective versus individual rights within indigenous communities and movements.<sup>34</sup> I therefore relied on my previous reading of literature that I had done concerned with Andean culture, in addition to talking to David about the project. I asked David how he would engage with the notion of 'rights' and the equable word to use in Quichua. He said he believed it not to be that simple. He explained that the concept of "rights", as understood by the non-indigenous world, is a matter concerned with the individual. Yet in the Andes, rights are regarded as being for the collective whole, rather than a sole person. This is emphasised through notions of solidarity and the importance of community and familial structures. Therefore, before engaging with the topic of women's rights with indigenous women, I felt I needed to ask them how they understood the term "rights" first. In order to do so, I envisaged spending several days in the workshops simply "getting to know" the women in an informal way. I felt this the most appropriate way to approach the topic of rights with the women from their own perspectives, rather than arriving and attempting to "lecture" about women's rights to them, without them knowing me first. I decided, despite my

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<sup>34</sup> These topics were raised during my Quichua classes and were subjects David and I discussed at length, particularly as I had engaged with discussions about such matters as part graduate studies and literature searches. I asked him his perspective on the modules I had been given to use, and how he considered they would be received in the indigenous communities.

apprehensions, that I would travel to the town and attend some of the workshops to see which method might work best.

I carried out a participant observation at first to enable me to sense how the women reacted to my presence, and to help me find a way to engage with the women. As a way of breaking the ice, I purchased some yarn and knitting needles and attempted to knit alongside the women, which sparked great amusement amongst them as I failed tremendously at it. I was also introduced to some of the indigenous market women, who bantered with me over language differences and laughingly suggested that I teach them English if they taught me Quichua, which I considered as a small sign of acceptance.

On one occasion, whilst waiting for the bus back to Cuenca, a woman from the previous day's workshop walked straight past me, without engaging me in any eye contact or greeting, but who knew I was there as she had seen me at a distance. Two other women walked passed me several minutes later, neither of whom I had met before, who said '*buenas tardes*' (good afternoon) to me with a smile. I had already observed that a form of greeting each other was important within Andean culture, usually verbally or through a handshake. I was struck, therefore, by the fact that a woman who had previously been introduced to me and who had giggled at my remarkable knitting skills, knowingly walked past me without giving me any recognition, even when I said good afternoon to her. While, on the one hand, I was aware of my sensitivity over not being accepted, I was also conscious of the need to establish confidence and rapport with the women in the workshops before I could attempt to engage with the module topics I had been assigned to discuss. My contact in the NGO told me that I did not have the time to simply "be present" in the workshops given the time constraints of the project, and that I needed to 'throw myself in'.

I consequently felt that there was a lack of awareness on the part of the organisation over my physical presence as a foreigner, and what that might mean in relation to working with indigenous women and western concepts. This was in addition to ethical considerations and relationships of power. My observations over what I needed to do first in order to carry out what the NGO anticipated of me, coupled with my own time constraints for my own research, conflicted with the expectations that the NGO had of me. Equally, questioning myself over the ethics

of participating within one group's agenda, when ultimately, I had another purpose entirely for being in the town, I made the decision to withdraw from this relationship.

### ***The Need to be Reflexive and Flexible in Establishing Access***

Feeling that I had wasted time in pursuing the above organisation and its project, which frustrated me, I also acknowledged the experience had been a positive one. It highlighted a number of significant challenges that can be encountered in qualitative research: negotiating power hierarchies, multiple and varying agendas of different groups and individuals (myself included), in addition to increasing awareness of the need to build rapport with potential participants. These were all issues that allowed me to be reflexive at this stage in the research process and from then onwards, in addition to being flexible. I was acutely aware of how I felt about this experience, but I was also fortunate to be able to acknowledge my feelings. As Kleinman highlights:

...field researchers may experience anger, disappointment, or ambivalence... researchers' expectations and feelings not only affect the research, but also become part of the process itself. Field-workers do not think of feelings as disturbances that impede objectivity and thus should be overridden. Rather, feelings become resources for understanding the phenomenon under study. We have all learnt the rule - examine your emotional reactions to the setting, the study, the participants. If you do not, your feelings will still shape the research process, but you will not know how. Our attitudes affect what we choose to study, what we concentrate on, who we ... interview, our interpretation of events, and even our investment of time and effort in the field. Because analysis begins at the start of the study (whether we acknowledge it or not), our values and feelings are caught up in the analysis (1991: 184-185).

The issues that had been raised by this initial attempt at establishing access into indigenous communities made me very aware of how I proceeded with the research from that point onwards. I decided to focus attention on establishing connections with people who could act as 'gatekeepers' and 'cultural brokers', rather than accessing indigenous communities via 'stakeholders'. The people whose permission is required to access a research site are commonly referred to as 'gatekeepers' (Willis, 2006: 147). 'Gatekeepers' are also individuals who can 'provide entrance' to a fieldwork location (Creswell, 1998: 60), or are people who are known and trusted by potential participants who can help the researcher gain access to the

latter individuals (Bell and Opie, 2002: 150). In this study, however, ‘gatekeepers’ worked alongside ‘cultural brokers’. Cultural brokers are people who ‘understand and are sympathetic to the values and issues of each of the relevant cultures’, such as my own alongside indigenous culture, and are ‘people that serve as links between individuals or groups who are culturally different’ (Eide and Allen, 2005: 50). Further, cultural brokers can provide ‘insights and advice’ to the researcher, to help them ‘enter the culture, learn how to understand behaviors, avoid social errors, and sustain good relationships’ (Crist and Escandón-Dominguez, 2003: 267). Likewise, cultural brokers can aid as translators for outside researchers (Hennink, 2008: 22), in addition to helping suggest people within the other culture that the researcher may find helpful to contact (Liamputtong, 2010: 67).

My primary cultural broker was David, my Quichua teacher. He willingly offered to suggest people who thought might be open to participating in my study, and who he could make contact with on my behalf. He directed his attention to people working in the DINEIB-Azuay, where he had many indigenous colleagues working in bilingual education. He also addressed more personal indigenous friends of his. In the first case, one potential informant who agreed to be interviewed stated that she would be busy until after the New Year, as she was expecting a baby. Nevertheless, while explaining my research to her in more detail, she had a confused expression on her face. A colleague sat beside her and we had an informal discussion about what “empowerment” might mean.<sup>35</sup> Between them, they concluded that it meant “*dominio*”. Whilst there are various interpretations for this word, I inferred that they meant “control” or “rule”, as they referred to it as a process of domination and power by somebody over someone else. I did not get the impression they meant it in a positive way either, as they referred to it as ‘*desde arriba hacia abajo*’, or in other words, “top-down”.<sup>36</sup> Although I was unable to secure a time to formally interview this woman, we nonetheless had an interesting conversation, as it was the first time I had directly spoken to indigenous women about my research project. They seemed unclear as to what the term “empowerment” meant. I therefore bore this in mind for future interviews, besides noting it as significant in relation to my research

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<sup>35</sup> Informal conversation: 29 October 2010.

<sup>36</sup> English to Spanish translation: ‘from above towards the bottom’.

questions. They had interpreted empowerment as a form of negative dominant power; the very opposite of what the concept attempts to achieve.

Susana was another informant located in the DINEIB-Azuay. Originally from the Saraguro community in the southern province of Loja, Susana agreed to be interviewed. When I arrived, however, she appeared to have been told very little about me, or why I wished to speak to her. I started from the beginning, explaining my research and the reason for approaching her. When I finished, despite understanding what I had said, she told me she was not always happy to participate in answering questions from foreigners, because she did not appreciate how people came, asked their questions, took away the information and then “benefited” from her culture, whilst they remained clueless about what had happened to the information they had given.<sup>37</sup> Though I was already aware of the complexities of obtaining consent from indigenous people and their potential for suspicion of outsiders, this was the first time someone in this context had been so honest with me. While difficult to hear, I really appreciated the fact Susana told me this, as it made me constantly evaluate how I approached people in the future. Equally, it demonstrated a level of understanding on Susana’s part in relation to her awareness of academia and associated research processes, besides indicating that she herself was well educated. Susana appeared to appreciate me explaining how I was not attempting to take advantage of her culture, but more so focus on understanding the experiences and realities of indigenous people so that I could engage with them later when analysing the data in relation to theories of empowerment from a Western perspective. She also liked the fact I wanted participants to know what I had written in my thesis in due course. She consequently seemed to warm to me, and verbally agreed to participate. I showed her my information sheet to confirm she fully understood the purpose of my questions, and she agreed to be recorded. She understood that she could stop the interview at any time. We talked for at least an hour, and Susana’s body language had changed towards me by the end. She lastly said she understood the tedious process of doing research, as she had done various projects herself. She showed me a recent book she had written, and as a way of showing reciprocity for her time, I bought a copy.

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<sup>37</sup> Interview: Cuenca, 17 November 2010.

Another example of a potential participant located by David was Diana, who lived in a small town about 45 minutes by bus from Cuenca. David and I went to visit Diana at her *pollera* workshop. He explained to her that I was doing a study for my university and that I was interested in talking with women in the Andes. I explained it to her further. Diana appeared awkward to begin with, but she agreed to talk with me and that I was welcome in her workshop any time. As David left us to chat together, Diana asked how I knew him. She giggled when I told her he was my Quichua teacher. Unsure of what the giggling meant at the time, I later realised that she did not speak any Quichua, nor did she realise that she was using Quichua words within her Spanish language. She was one example of the younger generation who had lost the use of Quichua.

Visiting Diana on several occasions, I began to encounter a number of tensions. When we talked about life in England, she told me how she really wanted to go the USA. She asked me if I had any family that she could marry, as she had heard that ‘all it took was six months to get papers through once getting married’.<sup>38</sup> She also asked me how much I thought it would cost to ship a sewing machine that would help her stitch the border patterns on to the bottom of her *polleras* that she sells, and could I help her investigate it. Aware of her lack of economic resources, I wondered how she planned to finance this purchase. Equally, a friend who came to help Diana in her workshop told me how her nine-month-old daughter was ill, and how her mother had told her she needed to get her daughter baptised. I was subsequently asked if I would be the child’s Godmother. When I enquired why she had asked me, she said that it was good to have someone from ‘outside’ who would not gossip about her or her family. I immediately felt uncomfortable about the idea, particularly as David had commented that Godparents in the Andes are responsible for their Godchildren if something were to happen to the parents. The woman told me to talk to my husband and let her know. So as not to be rude, I subsequently stated that it did not seem appropriate as neither of us was Catholic. This appeared to be a good enough reason not to be a Godparent in the Catholic Church, and the matter was dropped.

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<sup>38</sup> My perception was that this information had been gained as a consequence of migratory issues in Azuay, as Diana’s sister had illegally migrated to the USA for example, and how those left behind in Ecuador understood life in the United States as a migrant.

As such, I began to feel uneasy about the relationship that was being established with Diana, as the relationships of power between us were becoming increasingly noticeable. On one occasion she asked me if I would lend her \$200, because I must have “*milliones de dollars*”. When I explained I did not, she in turn asked if I would buy her phone credit. When I said I had little change, she disappeared to buy it herself. These two latter incidents began to give me the sense that Diana saw me as a potential monetary opportunity due to my nationality, mobility, and presupposed assumptions about me. The boundaries were beginning to become blurred. Although I always took an offering of bread or some other food item with me as a way of reciprocating her welcome and time, I never felt comfortable about conducting a formal interview with Diana.<sup>39</sup> I was concerned that different levels of expectations of me were going to increase on her part as a consequence. This exchange demonstrated another side of cross-cultural research and its messiness to me; participant suspicions aside, one constantly needs to maintain awareness of what people expect in return and how you as the researcher are going to ‘give back’. This is difficult to establish, however, if the relationship between the researcher and ‘researched’ is not well defined from the outset. This was an important lesson that I could learn from as I continued with the research process.

It had been my hope that these latter individuals, contacted through David, would be gatekeepers into indigenous communities for me, and instigate a ‘snowball sampling’ affect in identifying and approaching other potential participants in Azuay. Yet this did not occur with these participants, so I had to locate alternative cultural brokers to help me pinpoint other possible individuals in indigenous communities. I returned to the avenue of ‘stakeholders’, however, following new opportunities that arose out of previous connections established in Cuenca.

An old *Cuencano* friend provided me access into the Social and Gender Equality Unit at the Provincial Government of Azuay (GPA), which was working on

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<sup>39</sup> During fieldwork in rural villages around Cajamarca in northern Peru, Wright (2001: 144-146) explains the complexities she encountered with gift giving versus payment for interviews with women. She also highlights the impact that previous academics or NGOs can have on fieldwork locations and precedents they may set that future researchers may encounter. Fortunately, in my research I did not experience these conflicts, yet I did not feel it was ethical to pay participants for their time. Rather, I preferred to follow the etiquette of reciprocity and gift-giving in indigenous culture by taking a bag of bread or cakes with me when I went to meet/visit people, or buying them a coffee or ice-cream if we arranged to meet in the town centre. I found this was well received and appreciated by participants, and was also a method of breaking the ice with those I had not met before.

various gender-focused projects in rural communities across the province. After several days of following this up as a possible opportunity, this path appeared rife with political agendas, besides the GPA's expectations of me, and it did not seem a feasible option to pursue for my own research purposes. Further, the ethnicity of these respective communities seemed not to be heavily indigenous. Correspondingly, I made contact with Fundación Waaponi through another Ecuadorian friend. Here I conducted an interview with the founding Director, concerning the organisation's work with women and their methodological approaches and philosophies in relation to this.<sup>40</sup> Waaponi put me in contact with the Municipality of Nabón in the southern part of Azuay, as indigenous communities inhabit the rural outskirts of the town.

In Nabón I was able to carry out a small pilot study with women, in order to ascertain if my interview questions were a) appropriately worded for indigenous participants, and b) what possible sub-themes might emerge during interviews. It was conducted with both indigenous Quichua-Spanish speakers and non-indigenous women of different educational abilities, who were connected to social projects led by the municipality. This allowed me to consider if educational backgrounds, and the level of people's understanding, could influence how participants understood and responded to the interview questions related to power and empowerment. I was already aware that there was a high level of illiteracy amongst indigenous communities around Nabón. On one occasion, as I explained what the purpose of what I was doing to an indigenous woman, it was written all over her face that she did not understand what I was talking about. As we spoke, other indigenous women, many of an elder age, came and joined us, and there was a concern amongst them all that they were not going to understand my questions and so were not sure if they wanted to participate or not.

I began to sense that my questions were not appropriately written for indigenous participants; particularly non-educated informants, of whom I was likely to encounter several. In summary, I found that better educated people understood the questions more easily than the less educated, meaning I was required to revise my questions further. David had already helped me find a better way to word them in a more easily understandable fashion, but I realised I needed to go back again and consider re-writing and/or re-phrasing them, breaking the questions down into

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<sup>40</sup> Website address for Fundación Waaponi: <http://www.fundacionwaaponi.org>



smaller parts so that they did not appear so complicated. At the same time, when discussing the topic of “power” and “empowerment” especially, it was clear that these abstract concepts were more difficult to discuss with less educated or illiterate women. This was significant in relation to my over-arching research questions, and also supported the previous conversation I had with the women at the DINEIB-Azuay. Equally, it also meant that I needed to find an alternative way to address the topic of power and empowerment, particularly with indigenous women, as it was with this section of society that such notions appeared too complex to examine.

My relationship with Waaponi also led me to participate in a three-day workshop held at the University of Cuenca on the topic of ‘Gender Sensitive Participatory Budgets’, facilitated by an NGO worker from Bolivia.<sup>41</sup> This workshop was heavily linked to political issues concerning rural parishes under the umbrella of Cuenca Municipality, and thus not specifically linked to my research topic. However, it was a fascinating opportunity to network with other people who could potentially help my research, especially as there were indigenous participants involved.

During this workshop one employee from Waaponi asked me more about my research. She told me that if I wished to locate indigenous communities I would need to go to Cañar province or further north, as there were very few indigenous people in Azuay. This statement initially confused me, as I had accessed indigenous women in Nabón already. This raised intellectual questions for me concerning people’s identity, and how individuals from rural areas identified themselves, particularly as David had attempted to locate ‘*indigenous*’ participants in Azuay. Were women wearing a *pollera* and *sombrero* considered *campesino* or *indígena*, and who by, and how would they describe themselves? By wearing a *pollera* and *sombrero* were you automatically classed as indigenous, or were you considered *campesina*? What was the differentiating feature between the two terms? Was mother-tongue language a big determiner? Did losing the use of Quichua make you less indigenous? Or was I simply beginning to put my own interpretation on to it and be influenced by others’ constructs too? I battled with these questions for a number of days, as I felt I was beginning to distinguish between who *I* thought was indigenous or not, based on dress and language, and therefore who fit the ‘criteria’ for my research. This would in turn mean my sample would be biased. In order to address this issue, I focused

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<sup>41</sup> Workshop: 1-3 December 2010

my attention on Cañar province, where I had understood that people predominantly self-identified as indigenous Cañari with *orgullo* (pride), unless they were of clear *mestizo* descent.

### ***3.3 Flexibility in Research Design in Cañar***

#### ***New Cultural Brokers***

Accessing research participants in Cañar became much easier than it had been in Azuay. I was given a name and email address for an academic at the University of Cuenca by Prof. Rosaleen Howard from the University of Newcastle, UK. She told me that Dr. Alejandro Mendoza could pose as a helpful contact in making connections in Cañar. Firstly, Alejandro directed me to a number of university theses written about Cañari culture by indigenous students in his department. To his knowledge, he said nothing had been written specifically about gender or indigenous women in Cañar at that time. I asked why he thought this might be, and he suggested that gender issues were sensitive in Cañari culture, and that no one had had any interest in studying it directly from within the communities. Further, Alejandro very kindly acted as my primary cultural broker into Cañar, accompanying me there and introducing me to a number of his former indigenous students who were teachers at Instituto Quilloac.

Another key cultural broker that I came upon in Cañar, having established links with people in Quilloac, was Judy Blankenship. Coming to know Judy resulted from what Townsend and Burgess have referred to as an ‘unforeseen event of a chance meeting’ (2009b: 2), which they identify as often being crucial in the research process; ‘these events cannot be planned for, but when they happen, they must be built upon’ (2009b: 3). Following an interview with Urpi, the female indigenous leader of Quilloac, I met Urpi again several weeks later. I arranged to meet her with a friend from Cuenca who was setting up an indigenous exchange between Native Americans in Montana USA and indigenous people in Andean Ecuador. I suggested to my friend that Urpi might be a good connection to have in Cañar. During this informal conversation, Urpi referred to Judy Blankenship’s name in passing. I had requested that the Sydney Jones Library at the University of Liverpool purchase Judy’s first book, *Cañar: A Year in the Highlands of Ecuador* (2005), before I left on

research. Hence, I was already aware of her. Urpi told me that she was back in Cañar for her annual six-month visit. I located Judy by means of social media, and subsequently met her in Cuenca for coffee to discuss my research further.

In contrast to Alejandro, whose connections were primarily linked into the education sector in Cañar, Judy had a much wider engagement with the Cañari. Judy is an independent writer, editor and documentary photographer who first became acquainted with the highland town of Cañar in the early 1990s, after working as a photographer for a development agency in Costa Rica for six years (Blankenship, 2005). Arriving in Ecuador with her husband, Michael, Judy's wish was:

...to create a visual record of a time and place in the tradition of early documentary photographers... [she] wanted to participate as much as possible in the daily life of a place, among a group of people who would be [her] collaborators, show [her] how they perceived the world, and allow [her] to record it in photographs, oral histories, and video and audio recordings (Blankenship, 2005: 1-2).

Over the next two decades, Judy and Michael gradually built friendships with people in Cañar through projects undertaken by Judy with the Cañari people. Spending six months in Portland USA, and six months in Cañar each year, they decided to buy a piece of land and build a house amongst the Cañari community in the mid-2000s (Blankenship, 2013a).

Judy and I discussed my research at length, and she said she was very interested in the topic and that she would be happy to introduce me to some of her Cañari friends. The Cañari were familiar with her, and it sounded like she had gained the trust of many people. Judy talked about various socio-economic and political aspects of Cañar that she had observed over the years, how she thought things had changed and developed in society, and some observations that she had made over Cañari women in the rural communities. All this served as an interesting starting point in thinking about how to cultivate my research on female empowerment in Cañar.

Over the next several months, Judy and Michael opened up their home, offering me accommodation when required and Michael's delicious home-cooked food. This therefore provided me with a base from which to travel to conduct

fieldwork in neighboring communities.<sup>42</sup> In addition to the connections I had made via Alejandro, Judy helped me identify potential participants to approach to be involved in the research. While I was aware that this list was significantly biased in terms of whom Judy perceived as potentially ‘empowered’ and thus worth approaching, it nevertheless gave me a basis from which to work. I could then employ my snowball sampling method later. Many people on the preliminary list appeared as a consequence of a scholarship programme that Judy had established called the Cañari Women’s Education Foundation.<sup>43</sup>

### ***Engaging Flexibility in the Interview Approach***

Reflecting on some of the challenges I had encountered in relation to the interview questions during my pilot interviews, I decided I needed to approach the issue of empowerment in an alternative way with participants. Rather than asking questions

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<sup>42</sup> When I later fell pregnant unexpectedly, this source of support in Cañar was a blessing to have, as it provided me with an added feeling of security.

<sup>43</sup> The origins of the foundation lay with a good friend of Judy’s, an El Salvadorian named Ana Margarita Gasteazoro. Ana was an activist in El Salvador’s dirty war, was imprisoned for 18 months without charges, and sent into exile. ‘I knew her in Costa Rica, where I did an oral history and she told me that her father had educated her three brothers because “they would get married and support a family”, but not her because some man would be responsible for her (e.g. a husband). Ana never married, always lamenting that she didn’t get the education she deserved’ (Blankenship, 2013b). Ana had an interest in women’s education due to her personal experience, and fought for social justice and human rights until she died of breast cancer at the age of forty. ‘When she died, I decided a scholarship programme for women to go to university would be the best way to memorialize her’ (Blankenship, 2013b). The fund foundation that Judy set up in memory of Ana in 1992 carried out initial projects in Honduras and El Salvador. Its funds, approximately \$10,000 a year, come entirely from contributions made by family, friends and others, with volunteer administrators to allow every dollar donated to go to the women. From 2001, the fund has supported indigenous Cañari women to go to university and earn a degree. Between 2001 and 2012, twelve women graduated from university with technical and professional degrees. In 2013 there were eight more women studying with the Foundation’s support. In order to qualify for a scholarship, women must be indigenous Cañari and from a family with few resources. Women studying in Cuenca are paid \$100 a month in cash, and those in Riobamba are given \$90, as the cost of living is cheaper. Approaching their last year, \$500 is allowed for to cover the costs of thesis research, special courses and graduation costs. Judy states that: ‘We have 100% graduation rate because we allow flexibility for pregnancies and new babies (women may take off a semester), and for failure (if someone “loses” a year, the scholarship falls to 50% while they make up the course’ (2013b). There is a selection committee made up of every graduate on a voluntary basis, and besides an annual fundraising letter sent out to donors each year, the Fund has no administration costs. It became a registered charity in the USA in December 2011 and has recently begun to support those wishing to study for a Master’s degree. Judy says, ‘as our funds are stable and growing, we decided last year to support our graduates in Master’s degrees. Three a year, in the order they graduated. At present one graduate is studying for her MBA; others applied but failed to get into programmes. They’ll try again this year’ (2013b).

directly related to people's experiences within the arenas of 'empowerment' and 'power', I decided that a narrative style of enquiry might be a better method to employ. I returned to a passage by Chase, who reflects not only on her own experience of interviews concerned with specific sociological processes and their associated sociological questions, but also on that of other researchers. She states that:

... sociological questions fail to invite the other's story because they orient the interviewee to the researchers interest. Even when the researcher phrases such questions in everyday speech and intends to produce a collaborative research relationship, sociological questions direct the other to the researcher's concerns and away from her own life experiences. In some cases, of course, participants willingly enter such a conversation to help the researcher with his or her questions. But even in those cases, the researcher invites a report rather than a story because the weight or import of the question remains on the researcher's side, with the interviewee acting at best as a willing reporter or informant... Unlike sociological questions, questions that invite the other's story encourage a shift of responsibility for the import of the talk. Our task as interviewers is to provide the interaction and discursive condition that will arouse her desire to embrace that responsibility. We are most likely to succeed when we orient our questions directly and simply to life experiences that the other seeks to make sense of and to communicate... Before we start interviewing, we need to begin with, or at least work our way toward, some sense of the broad parameters of the other's story, the life experience he or she seeks to make sense of and to communicate. And we do this by articulating what makes this group of people's life experiences interesting in the first place (2003: 282-283).

I therefore thought about some of the things Judy had mentioned to me about Cañari society, and looked at the first list of contacts to approach. Bearing in mind the link Alejandro had provided me with in Cañar through education, alongside the establishment of the Scholarship Foundation by Judy, a dominant factor between many of these people seemed to be education; either obtaining a formal education, or little to none. Given the supremacy of formal education within theories of female empowerment, the topic of education appeared a logical place to start.

Through discussion with Judy, there appeared to be a lot of indigenous women in Cañar who were either becoming young professionals, or who had their own businesses, or who were community leaders. I was also aware that access to education for indigenous women and girls had been minimal for many years, especially during the hacienda period (see Chapter IV). Thus my primary curiosity

lay in how women had gradually increased their access to, and obtainment of, formal education in Cañar. In turn, what impact had this had on women's lives, both at a domestic and public level? At the same time, I became interested in looking at how women's roles had changed over the years in Cañar and the possible instigators of change, in order to establish potential factors that may influence processes of female empowerment in this area. Other questions that arose for me were as follows: it could be said that Cañari women have gained more professional or "powerful" positions in recent years, but how would they describe this change? Would they identify it as a process of "empowerment" in the same way the West might? Equally, was an increase in the importance of women's roles in society specific to Cañar (and/or why?), or was it happening elsewhere in Ecuador? To what extent had the increased focus on bilingual education in the country impacted upon women's professionalism in Cañar? How did men feel about women becoming professionals today?

While on the surface there seemed to be many issues that had the potential to be factors relating to women's empowerment for inquiry in Cañar, I was concerned about how I was going to address them without applying my own biases and/or assumptions. Moreover, prior to fieldwork, I had been approaching the research from a perspective of critiquing the notion of female empowerment in development. Yet much of what appeared to be occurring with indigenous women in Cañar was caught up in cultural issues from a grass-roots perspective, rather than being as a result of development projects aimed at the empowerment of women in the region. Consequently, I began to feel in a muddle over whether I was still to pursue the analytical development angle, or to alter it to a more relevant context. After some thought, I realised that the development versus culture problem I was facing with regards to my research questions could in fact reinforce the point that "development" processes can take place within live cultural settings. Therefore, instead of making it a "problem", it was a positive observation to pursue. I had also clearly realised that if I were to base my data collection in Cañar henceforth, I needed to stop worrying about the potential for my research questions to change, as the reality of exploratory fieldwork meant having to adapt the research questions was perfectly normal, depending on the fieldwork reality.

Therefore, I decided that asking participants to freely discuss experiences of

different aspects of their lives could aid in drawing out some interesting data. If I were able to interview multiple members of the same family across generations, this would also provide another dimension to the analysis. In essence, generating narratives is about story telling, and this is ‘what we do with our research materials and what informants do with us’ (Riessman, 1993: 1). A key way that people make sense of their world and experience is ‘by casting it in narrative form’, through which meaning-making structures are established (1993: 4). Equally, narratives are strongly linked to the life history story, denoting that data is generally produced ‘chronologically’ and participants highlight key moments or people that characterise their stories (Gibbs, 2012). These serve as ‘good indicators of how a person conceives of their life, what it means to them’ (Gibbs, 2012: 62). Consequently, my approach to data collection through interviewing altered to engage with a focus on generating descriptions with elements of life story methodology. By asking about aspects of their lives, breaking ice with people could be easier too. As Elliot suggests, ‘we are most likely to succeed in eliciting narratives from our research subjects when we ask simple questions that clearly relate to their life experiences’ (2005: 29). In adapting the interview approach, therefore, it felt a much more relevant way to gain insight into people’s experiences, perceptions and opinions. While the ontological components had not changed per se, the focus was placed, however, on matters directly related to the lives of participants in Cañar, as opposed to complicated Western sociological constructs that could seem daunting, and therefore off-putting, to people.

The aim, therefore, was to elicit data about individual life experiences that might contain nuances related to the sociological phenomena of empowerment processes to be analysed later. I recognised that this approach to data collection would subsequently require me to address the data differently too. I would likely need to use current theories of empowerment to explore participant’s words and their meanings vis-à-vis women’s empowerment in Cañar, instead of using participants’ words to examine the notion of empowerment in development from an indigenous perspective, as had been the original intention. Consequently, my flexibility in shifting the exploratory research approach was ever more evident at this juncture.

## ***Female Embodiment in the Field***

In order to help develop my data collection in Cañar, Judy accompanied me to meet several prospective participants in the communities and introduce me to them. By doing so, individuals could connect me to someone they already had an acquaintance with, which aided me in building trust with people. From then on, when a participant referred me to another possible participant I was given permission to reference their name. I found this a useful strategy in establishing confidence with individuals at first.<sup>44</sup> One significant point of interest, however, vis-à-vis engaging with participants (particularly women), was when I realised I was pregnant. Although this was an unexpected occurrence, I found that this embodied reality suddenly became a starting point of conversation with people, especially with the passing of time and changes in my physical appearance. For the majority of women in Cañar, pregnancy was something they could identify with directly. As such, being pregnant while conducting fieldwork appeared to open up space for dialogue and a level of mutual understanding with many indigenous women that I had not encountered previously. I found this extremely noteworthy.<sup>45</sup> Prior to pregnancy, I would have been asked where my husband was, and subsequently, if I had children. When I would say, 'no, not yet', many women would look at me blankly, as if they could not understand why I was married and did not have children. Becoming pregnant also meant that my personal situation made my ability to be objective in the process of

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<sup>44</sup> I had the sense people's thinking was along the lines of: 'If you have talked to so and so already, you must be OK to talk to!'

<sup>45</sup> Other researchers have documented the role that pregnancy has played in conducting fieldwork research. Reich (2003) found that being pregnant while collecting data opened up access into the field of social work and child protection, despite her initial anxiety over being pregnant in research at the start. In contrast, van Tilburg (1998) recounts her experience of being a pregnant anthropologist undertaking research in Senegalese community. Her story tells of how she was ignorant in her initial expectations over women's discussion of pregnancy and childbirth within the community, and how she came to realise that this subject was a forbidden discourse rife with secrecy and complexities as a method of protection. Her presence as a pregnant European woman limited conversation with women as they placed her into a category within their own culture. Thus this served as a detriment to data collection as women hid information. Kannen (2013), in her study of identity and privilege, notes how her pregnancy influenced how interviewees interacted with her, in comparison to when she was not pregnant. In like vein, Yarwood (2013) notes the difference in her interviewee's interaction with her before and after she was pregnant. Not being a parent while investigating discourses of motherhood proved challenging to Yarwood, yet after becoming pregnant 'the embodied visibility of this provided participants with a reference point during their discussions about their own parenting identities' (2013: 451). Ortbals and Rincker (2009) discuss the practical issues of an embodied researcher due to pregnancy, such as health, travel, support networks, and appropriate dress and appearance for the field site while pregnant.



data collection lessen, as my subjective identity as a pregnant woman became part of the exchange through discussing my own experience of pregnancy at times. Nevertheless, I did not deem this as a negative issue so much as a positive one.

In cases where women worked in traditional medicine or community midwifery, I often found that they provided me pregnancy advice based on their own experiences and work. I in turn considered this as a point of encouragement, besides a powerful display of indigenous knowledge giving and a crossing over of understandings from one culture to another. Other women would share stories of childbirth and motherhood with me, and wanted to know what I wished to call the child, what childbirth provision was like in the UK, or how I felt about becoming a mother. Women who had become mothers whilst studying also openly discussed their experiences and the challenges they had faced as a student-parent. To what extent all these women would have interacted with me in the same manner, had I myself not been pregnant, is unknown. Yet I can only reflect on my pregnancy as being an aid in creating a level of understanding with participants, especially when reflecting back on the previous experiences I had with people before I arrived in Cañar. For those that were not mothers, I sensed that the fact I was pregnant and remained far away from home, was a curiosity to them. Equally, they could often identify with motherhood either from observing their own mothers, other female family members, or being an elder sibling with care responsibilities for younger children in the past or nieces and nephews today. I myself also tried to imagine how the Cañari communities considered me; a white woman, six months pregnant and walking up mountains several thousand metres above sea level, stopping every so often to catch my breath. In the region of Cañar, this would most likely be an unusual sight.

**Photo 1: Fieldwork in Cañar, 23 weeks pregnant.**



Photography by J. Blankenship, June 2011.

### ***Reflexive Interviewing in Cañar***

Once I had begun to interview participants in Cañar, the research process appeared to quickly pick up; with one person often suggesting another to approach for interviewing. Participants in Cañar ranged in age from 16 years old, to a woman in her late 80s (Mama Shulla, referenced at the beginning of this chapter). I obtained consent from the 16 year olds mother, as this interviewee was under 18. I had nonetheless built up a relationship with both the latter mother and daughter prior to interview, so an element of trust had already been established between us. Interviewees were mostly female, but I interviewed a number of men also. Interviews would generally last between one to two hours and participants rapidly relaxed with me and spoke openly. I found it easier to explain the purpose of my study, having adapted the approach to data collection, as people appeared to better understand what I said and consent to interviewing. I emphasised how any information they provided would be referred to through the use of pseudonyms in the thesis, and only one participant requested that their real name be used.<sup>46</sup> All the interviewees agreed to be recorded by the use of a small Dictaphone, and all participants understood they were able to end the conversation or recorder at any

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<sup>46</sup> For this reason I have not included any photographs of participants in the thesis, nor did I take photographs of them, as I did not feel it was necessary or appropriate. I have been offered the use of photographs that Judy has taken, but have refused.

time. In order to ease participants into the conversation I would often initiate general questions; about their community for example, or what they could tell me about the hacienda period. There was only one interview, with Mama Shulla, in which language difference became a significant issue. All other participants were well versed in Spanish, although appreciated my attempts at some basic Quichua – usually to great amusement.

In relation to my female participants, some had similar professions to each other, such as being teachers, for example. Others were uneducated without work, some were university graduates, some were illiterate but had built up a business and were obtaining an income, and some had become heavily involved in political issues at a regional and national level. Regardless of their academic and professional status, however, the thematic guide used in the interviews with these women was predominantly the same throughout. This guide was established both as a consequence of reoccurring themes that had appeared during the pilot interviews, and as interviews were undertaken in Cañar and reflected upon afterwards. Examples of topics discussed included:

- Childhood and adolescent experiences
- Role of parents during childhood and adolescence
- The life of their parents and grandparents
- Aspirations as a youngster and extent of fulfilment, how and why
- Importance of education during childhood and parents' attitudes towards education
- Significant experiences that impacted their lives in a particular way
- Experiences as a wife and mother (if applicable)
- How they had acquired their current employment or public roles (if applicable)
- Migration in Cañar
- Female indigenous identity
- Discrimination; had it been suffered, how and in what ways
- Women's roles within their community
- *Machismo*
- Future aspirations for themselves and next generations

If it seemed appropriate, I also discussed indigenous cosmology with them, and their experiences with NGOs and development projects. Those that had had experience in political arenas gave me further intrigue, and so I asked these women about their experiences in this field and how they perceived the participation of indigenous women at a political level nationally, as opposed to solely at a community and familial level. When interviewing men I touched upon similar topics to those above

in relation to their lives, in addition to asking them about their perspectives on women's changing roles in Cañar over the years. Interviews with men also added to the data via familial relationships with some of my female informants.

In some cases, I interviewed multiple members of the same family. The decision to interview other members of a family often arose as a consequence of interviewing the first person. Multiple familial interviews helped to verify information, besides generating data to help contrast and compare experiences and perspectives on the same issues between one family member and the next. I was thus able to observe the extent to which individual's stories corroborated one another's, particularly in relation to topics such as parents' accounts of the hacienda, or familial processes of migration. However I did not repeat anything a prior interviewee had told me. Likewise, if I became aware of familial disagreements or factional disputes at a community level, I refrained from initiating the discussion of such matters and allowed interviewees to raise them as and when, and talk about them how they wished. I consequently made note of the issues for reflection later. Fortunately I did not encounter tensions directly with participants regarding any disputes, nor was anyone wary of the purpose of my research or questions vis-à-vis spying for households and/or other communities (see Noroña (2007) for an example of the latter concern).

On occasion there were topics that touched various participants deeply, who shed tears while recounting their stories. What I noticed, however, was that these emotions flowed freely and people were not embarrassed to be crying. I sensed that they felt comfortable enough with me to be able to express themselves in this way. From an ethical perspective, I could not anticipate if a topic about an individual's childhood, for example, or experience at school might generate an emotional response. In cases where participants did become emotional, however, I became very aware of how such issues might relate to other aspects of their lives, and was therefore sensitive about touching upon these in an appropriate way. For example, if someone had a heavily emotional response to talking about their childhood due to the loss of a parent, I was careful over how I asked about their own experiences of parenthood. While I recognised that this meant I was imposing a pre-conceived interpretation on to the participant's own experience, I felt it necessary to be reflexively aware in order to reduce any undue stress on the interviewee. Equally,

given I was asking people about their life experiences, I felt it respectful to reflect on my own with them, if they asked me about myself. I always gave participants an opportunity to ask me anything at the end of the interview, and this form of reciprocal information sharing always appeared to be appreciated.

My experience of conducting research in Cañar was therefore less fraught with methodological issues and tensions than those I had encountered during the initial stages of my research in Azuay. There was only one occasion in which I found myself in a difficult situation.<sup>47</sup> Thus, despite the cultural differences between the participants and myself, I found the Cañari people welcoming of me overall. Scheyvens and Leslie argue that for understandings between the researcher and the participants to be enhanced within cross-cultural research, it is critical that the researcher have 'genuine respect for local people and customs, flexibility in the research design, a sense of humour, and a willingness to share one's own experiences and knowledge with research participants' (2000: 129). Within this research my aim was to allow for all of those elements to function. To what extent the cultural brokers that I established in Cañar influenced the collection of data, besides the physical presence of my pregnancy, is unknown. Yet I conclude that these two

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<sup>47</sup> One of my participants asked if she could arrange to come by my apartment in Cuenca as she had something to talk to me about. Without trying to pre-judge this request, I agreed, and she persisted in arranging a time. When the participant arrived along with her sister, who was carrying a large bowl containing a cooked guinea pig (*cuy*), *choclo*, and potatoes, I sensed that there could be an agenda. This is because the giving of a *cuy* is a significant gift, particularly to an 'outsider', due to the cultural importance of *cuyes* in Andean society. Sitting down, the woman began to explain how her younger sister was about to graduate from college and that they had come to offer me gifts and ask if I would be her sister's *madrina* (Godparent). I was not expecting a request like it. Translating for my husband, I asked the woman what being a *madrina* entailed. She explained that I would have to attend the graduation, and that the normal custom was to buy the Graduand a ring. While she was talking, she removed the baby who was sleeping on her back and explained that this was her sister's two-month-old daughter. I interpreted the way she did this as a means to influence me in my decision, as she knew I was expecting a baby girl. Further, the woman reinforced her familial situation, in that her mother was sick and her father had abandoned them, and she was the only person providing an income for her family. Consequently, feeling manipulated too, I was concerned that this dialogue had not simply been initiated in relation to her sister's graduation. Recalling David's explanation over the role of Godparents in the Andes, I was worried that the underlying expectations of undertaking this role would be much greater than what they appeared. I in turn explained to the woman that I would need to think about. Internally, however, I needed to process the situation and required space to do so. This event instigated a series of issues related to conducting qualitative research: expectations of participants over the researcher and relationships of power, 'giving back', ethical conduct, and the role of past researchers and their impact on field sites. I was aware of other 'outsiders' who had undertaken this role for other Cañaris, and so wondered the extent to which the participant anticipated that I would agree. I knew that I could not say yes, yet it was an extremely uncomfortable situation. I nonetheless tried to explain the best I could as to why I could not do it. Inevitably, it left the woman and her family disappointed.

aspects may have also been motivating factors in my establishment of trust and understanding with the Cañari participants, whose words predominate in the proceeding chapters.

### ***3.4 Triangulation, Analysis and Dissemination: Narratives unlocking experiences***

Changing the approach and focus of my questions in Cañar meant that the ultimate aim of the research altered too. What I wished to produce now were descriptions of indigenous participants' experiences and memories. Many interviewees also provided me insight into their perceptions and opinions on particular matters, such as migration, NGOs, education and community life. The goal for analysis was to explore these ontological components for processes of "empowerment" that might emerge from within participants' words. In order to assess the extent to which processes of female empowerment could be identified, however, the thesis has necessitated a theoretical consideration of empowerment as currently discussed by Western scholarship (see Chapter II). By using these theoretical frameworks in order to analyse the data, rather than using indigenous understandings of empowerment to assess the theories (as per the original intention), the research questions now ask the following:

*What processes have Cañari women gone through in order to acquire "empowered" positions?*

*Are there any significant factors that influence processes of "empowerment" for women in Cañar?*

*What has been the outcome of Cañari women's "empowerment" for themselves as individuals, and for their communities?*

*To what extent do women who may be considered "empowered" by the developed world challenge the appropriateness of a western concept of empowerment for indigenous women?*

### ***Processing the Data***

The first action following fieldwork was to transcribe the interview recordings. Engaging with interview transcription is a lengthy process, but can be doubly

complicated when working in a second language and encountering multiple accents which you are not familiar with day-to-day. This has the risk of transcript content not being accurate. Thus, once the transcripts were completed, the recordings were listened to again while reading the transcriptions, to check for accuracy. Very often a word one day can be heard differently the next, and so it was important to clarify that the transcription content was correct. Carrying out this second stage was also useful in becoming more familiar with the data.

Once this process of transcription was complete, the transcripts were read over again in order to familiarise myself with their content further. As I read I began to introduce a method of 'holistic coding' to the transcript paper, as a 'preparatory approach to a unit of data before a more detailed coding or categorization process' (Saldaña, 2012: 118). A colloquial way to describe this process is 'lumping' (Saldaña, 2012: 119). Examples of holistic coding at this stage were 'Formal Education' or 'Family Dynamics'. A summary was made at the end of the transcript as a reminder of the interview content and codes to refer back to later.

After this had been carried out across all the interviews, using the holistic coding names on a spread sheet in Excel, I established sub-categories from the data as I began to pull out passages and quotes from individual transcripts. Doing this allowed me to view all data related to a code and sub-category from across the whole corpus of interviews. Examples of such sub-categories include 'Formal Education: Experience of University' or 'Family Dynamics: Relationship with Parents'. By doing this it allowed me to identify a number of broad themes to be discussed in the thesis, while identifying the sub-themes within them. This in turn allowed me to compare and contrast individuals experiences, perceptions and opinions, in addition to more contextual and cultural information to help build my analysis in the text.

Further, it allowed me to identify a number of participants whose stories could be used as small case-studies in the data chapters to the thesis. These case-studies provide specific examples of life processes and experiences in the words of participants, maintaining the interpretivist research approach. These descriptive examples allow for the participants' words to generate meaning in relation to theories of empowerment. Moreover, by using case-studies in this way, they also follow previous scholarly conventions in analysing narratives and life histories from the Andes, particularly those of indigenous women (Bourque and Warren, 1991;

Bronstein, 1982; Cervone et al., 1998; Hamilton, 1998; Miño, 2009; Rens, 2003; Rodas, 2007; Rodas, 2009; Sniadecka-Kotarska, 2001).<sup>48</sup> Within the thesis, and as part of triangulation, documents obtained in the field are also utilised, in addition to secondary sources and literature. Field documents include life histories and biographies written by members of communities that participants originated from. Using these as a reference has enabled the validity of information, particularly in relation to indigenous political processes in the area under study and confirming data provided by participants. I also make reference to a document recently received by an ex Peace Corps volunteer, who I made connection with via Judy. He kindly allowed me to make use of this document in the production of this thesis.<sup>49</sup>

An important aspect to me of this work is that it be taken back to Cañar in due course, to maintain the “giving back” element of cross-cultural research. There are a number of mechanisms through which this can be done, including its accessibility to local organisations such as TUCAYTA and via my cultural brokers in Cañar - particularly Judy.

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<sup>48</sup> Within the respective chapters, I have freely translated interview data into English in the text, and the original Spanish is presented in a footnote. Through the process of translation, there is always a risk of meaning being lost. Hence there is importance in providing the original transcript text in order to overcome any ambiguity or loss of meaning.

<sup>49</sup> Permission to use granted: 16 May 2014.



## **Chapter IV**

### **Cañar: An Andean Locus of Development**

This chapter considers various socioeconomic and political developments in Cañar, particularly since Spanish colonisation, in order to provide a context for the narratives of Cañari women that are discussed in the following two chapters. The first section outlines several important points concerning the geography and population of Cañar province. It also briefly discusses the arrival of the Spanish and the changes that this brought to the area. In turn, section 4.2 addresses the hacienda in Cañar. It outlines the hierarchical social structure present on the largest estate in the area, hacienda Guantug, in addition to the working conditions of indigenous people and the abuse they encountered at the hands of estate managers. With time, and the coming of agrarian reform, conflicts began to exist between the indigenous workers and the administrators. In this light, section 4.3 outlines a number of aspects of the agrarian reform process on Guantug, highlighting the influence of external actors that enabled consciousness-raising amongst a number of men on the hacienda. Women's participation in political issues during this time period appears to have been minimal, thus it is through the narratives and actions of men that this account comes to life. With the help of outsiders, these protagonists gradually mobilised other indigenous people, beginning a process of indigenous development and organisation. In section 4.4, longer-term outcomes of the demise of the hacienda are discussed, including the out-migration of men, and the development of EIB and the establishment of a bilingual institute. Within these discussions, reference is made to their impact on Cañari women's lives.

#### ***4.1 Geography, Population and History***

The region inhabited by the Cañari in Ecuador is found in the southern Andean cordillera. Cañar province, nestled between Azuay and Chimborazo, is divided into two distinct zones by the mountains that run through its territory; the northern segment is known as Hatun Cañar or Upper Cañar, and the southern as Cañaribamba (Danbolt Drange, 1997: 41). These two zones gave the local

indigenous peoples their name as Cañari (Quinde, 2001). In 2010, the total provincial population was 225,184. Over 50 per cent was female (INEC, 2010: 2).<sup>50</sup>

Cañar province is noted for a poverty level of 70 per cent, with 39 per cent languishing in extreme poverty; a quarter of the province lives with an income worth less than a basket of goods and services to satisfy basic needs. On national average, 73 per cent of homes have piped water, whereas in Cañar only 56.8 per cent do. In contrast, 92 per cent have electricity (Ministerio de Coordinación de la Producción, Empleo y Competividad, 2011: 23-24). According to the 2010 census, 53 per cent of the total Cañar population live in rural areas. The economically active population (EAP) in Cañar represents two per cent of the national labour force. 45 per cent of the EAP in Cañar work in agriculture. Behind manufacturing and construction, agriculture represents the third most important economic sector in the province (2011: 14-17). The climate in Cañar varies according to the season, with two rainy periods usually falling between February - April and October - November. Temperatures can vary during the day, but are predominantly around 5°C between 2500m and 3500m. Heights reach over 4000m in some areas. Erosion in some parts has caused the land to be unproductive, but access to water and the climate have made agriculture the main source of subsistence, without the need for terraces like those used in Peru. Artificial drainage systems have been imperative in order to make the most of water at higher altitudes (Danbolt Drange, 1997: 41).



**Photo 2: Cañar Landscape, 2011.** Photograph by M. James, 21 July 2011.

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<sup>50</sup> When observing the provincial populations statistics for the Andean cordillera in the 2010 census, there were more women than men recorded in each respective province (INEC, 2011).

An agricultural census in Ecuador has not been conducted since 2000. The total surface area of Cañar used for agriculture in 2000 was around 258,000 hectares. Of this, 27 per cent was mountainous or forested, 18 per cent was natural pasture, and 12 per cent moorland. The remaining area was used for cultivated pastures (16 per cent), permanent crops (13 per cent), fallow and transitory crops (8 per cent), with 5 per cent given to ‘other uses’ and ‘unused’ (INEC, 2000). With a provincial total of 32,174 agricultural productive units, 88 per cent belonged to small producers, in contrast to 10 and 2 per cent for medium and large units respectively. The large farms are in the minority but concentrate 54 per cent of the land surface (138,193 hectares) (Ministerio de Coordinación de la Producción Empleo y Competividad, 2011: 18-19). The principal crops grown in Cañar include beans, maize, wheat, barley and potatoes – referred to as transitory crops, in addition to vegetables grown at higher altitudes, while produce such as bananas, cacao, coffee, and cane sugar are cultivated in small amounts at lower levels – considered as permanent crops (Cárdenas Flores, 2009; INEC, 2000).<sup>51</sup> There is also a large quantity of livestock reared, mainly on subsistence orientated family farms, which produces significant amounts of milk that makes Cañar one of the larger producing provinces. Milk and sugar production are the two principal manufacturing activities in the province. The milk industry supplies the national market with a variety of products, and milk is bought directly from producers, with a premium made for quality (Ministerio de Coordinación de la Producción Empleo y Competividad, 2011: 21-22).

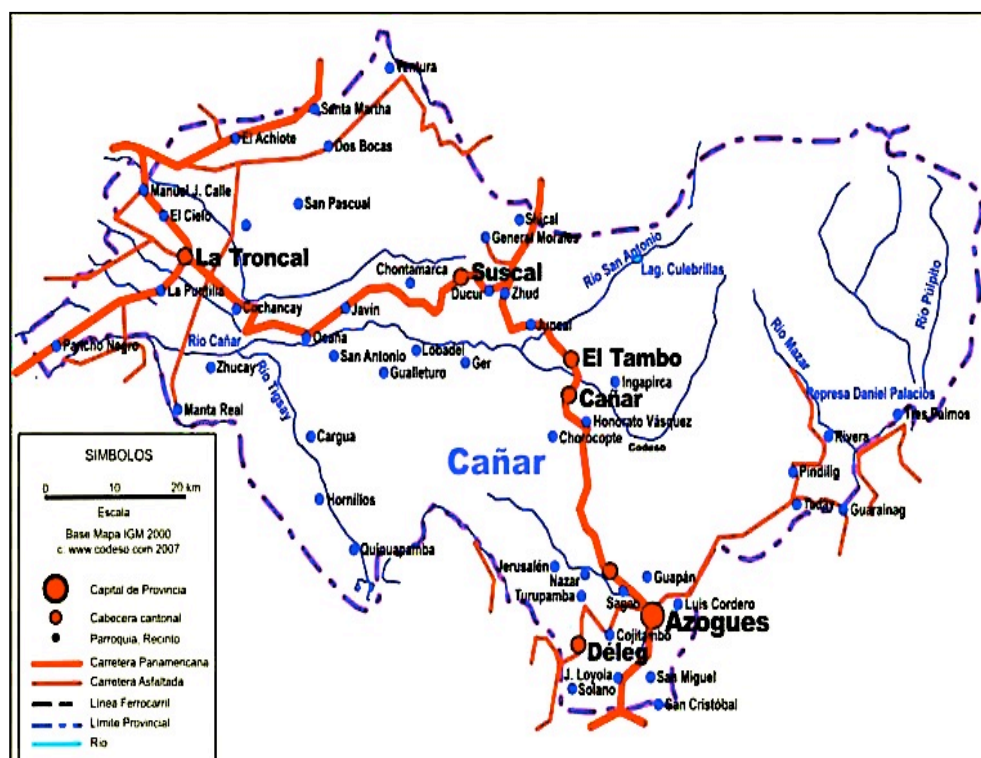
Administratively, Cañar province encompasses seven *cantones* – Azogues, Cañar, Biblián, La Troncal, El Tambo, Déleg and Suscal – with the provincial capital being Azogues. A *municipio* and its respective mayor or mayoress governs each *cantón*. As a *cantón*, Cañar is further divided into twelve *parroquias* (parishes); the urban *parroquia* of Cañar, and eleven rural *parroquias* called Gualleturo, Juncal, Ingapirca, Honorato Vásquez, Chorocopte, General Morales, Chontamarca, San Antonio, Zhud, Ventura and Ducur (Cárdenas Flores, 2009).

A large proportion of the *cantón* sits at a coastal level, sustaining a tropical and subtropical climate, although Cañar town and its surrounding indigenous communities, where the majority of this research was conducted, rests at 3,160m

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<sup>51</sup> See Table 4 within the INEC (2000) database for a further break down of crop cultivation.

above sea level. Cañar town is believed to be one of the coldest in Ecuador (Cárdenas Flores, 2009). In the 2010 census, *cantón* Cañar had a population of 59,323.<sup>52</sup> Of this figure, 54 per cent were recorded as female (31,953 women); 39 per cent of the *cantón* population identified themselves as indigenous in 2010 (INEC, 2010: 8; 2011).<sup>53</sup>



**Map 2: Provincial Map of Cañar, Ecuador**

Source: [http://www.codeso.com/TurismoEcuador/Mapa\\_Canar.html](http://www.codeso.com/TurismoEcuador/Mapa_Canar.html)

Accessed: May 2014

<sup>52</sup> When compared to the figure recorded in 1982 (75, 282), the population appears to have decreased significantly over the last 25 to 30 years (INEC, 2010). Much of this can be attributed to the recent boom of external migration across the province (see section 4.4).

<sup>53</sup> (When linking to the website, please scroll across the blue caption tabs for access to cantonal statistics). This figure contrasts with 76.7 per cent of people who identify as indigenous in *cantón* Suscal, yet this *cantón* was recorded as only having a population of 5, 016 (INEC, 2011).



**Map 3: Political Division of Cantón Cañar showing Parroquias**

Source: Revista Cuenca Ilustre Blog

<http://patomiller.wordpress.com/?s=canar&search=Ir>

Accessed: May 2014

The Cañari have a rich and intense historical past, which has been well documented elsewhere (Danbolt Drange, 1997; Engwall, 1995; Fock and Krener, 1978; Hirschkind, 1995; Kyle, 2000; Pribilsky, 2007; Quinde, 2001; Saloman, 2008; Solano, 2010; Vásquez, 2011). It is not the purpose to provide a lengthy historical overview here, but it is worth noting that pre-Columbian evidence suggests the Cañari have inhabited this territory for more than three thousand years (Blankenship, 2005: 8; Danbolt Drange, 1997: 43). Likewise, it is noteworthy that prior to the Spanish conquest, the *ayllu* was the basis to society, made up of families built upon a common line of ancestry.<sup>54</sup>

When the Spanish arrived on the coast of Peru in 1532, a group of local Cañari leaders went to meet Pizarro at Tumbes, offering support against the Incas. They accompanied him to Cajamarca (Peru) where Atahualpa was defeated, before heading back north to Cañar with Sebastián de Benalcázar (Hirschkind, 1995: 327).

<sup>54</sup> Belonging to the *ayllu* allowed its members to automatically access its resources that it had vested as the basis to subsistence living (Silverblatt, 1980: 152). Women in Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia had legal rights to communal lands within the *ayllu*, and were able to control their own production on them (Hamilton, 1998: 23). Women located labour through kinship networks. If women experienced the loss of their husbands' labour due to the *mita*, mechanisms were in place to ensure that women acquired satisfactory labour in compensation (Silverblatt, 1980: 154). The term "community", rather than the *ayllu*, is now more frequently used in literature due to the erosion and fragmentation of *ayllus* during the colonial period by the Spanish, which led to the 'basic social units being reduced to a "community"' (Molinié-Fioravanti, 1986: 342).

Non-Inca groups like the Cañari negotiated with the Spanish to ‘mobilize labor and arms, organize tribute, and supply subsistence goods’ (Saloman, 2008: 29). In consequence, with movement of Cañari across the empire, Cañari troops aided the Spanish in seizing the Inca centres of Cuzco, Lima, and Quito (Hirschkind, 1995; Saloman, 2008). Throughout the 1530s and 1540s, the Cañari fought on the Spanish side (Engwall, 1995: 352), and local Cañari lords had the opportunity to recover some of their pre-Inca autonomy (Saloman, 2008).

Yet these political ties were short-lived, as increasing numbers of European colonisers arrived searching for gold ‘to fill their arcs’ (Vásquez, 2011: 5). Before Spanish colonisation, mining in Cañar had been an emerging activity. However, the colonists took over the land and exploited the resources available at the expense of free “native” labour via the *mita* system. The *mita* made work by indigenous people in the mines obligatory, and workers became known as *mitayos*, treated like slaves by the Spanish (Vásquez, 2011).<sup>55</sup> However, with an increasing European population alongside dwindling numbers of native Cañari due to epidemic European disease, such as small-pox, the Spanish looked elsewhere for mine workers. Indigenous groups further north, in addition to slaves from Africa, were relocated to Cañar. In turn, this also meant that significant numbers of Spaniards went out into the countryside, ‘generating a population of rural mestizos’ (Hirschkind, 1995: 332). Over time, with mining activity not generating sufficient economic prosperity, particularly from the 1600s onwards (Vásquez, 2011: 18), agriculture became the dominant form of production that ‘served to maintain the whites and mestizo interests in the countryside’ (Hirschkind, 1995: 332).

Consequently, the Cañari were forced to work as indebted *conciertos* in agriculture on large-scale estates (haciendas) belonging to Spanish lords through a system called *concertage*. *Concertage* was similar to the *mita*, whereby indigenous people were required to carry out free agricultural work for the *hacendados*, losing their freedom and debt peonage became the norm (Solano, 2010: 31-32). The most significant haciendas in the region were established in Hatun Cañar (Kyle, 2000; Vásquez, 2011).

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<sup>55</sup> See Burkholder and Johnson (2004) and Bakewell (2004) for further discussion on the *mita* system in the Andes.

Following independence in 1822, the exploitative nature of the Spanish over indigenous people in Ecuador continued into the twentieth century.<sup>56</sup> As demonstrated in other studies of highland haciendas in twentieth century Ecuador (Brandi, 1976; Cervone, 2012; Lyons, 2006), the Cañari endured socio-economic and political repression on large estates. In Cañar, the largest hacienda, called Guantug, was privately owned until 1956, when the Church inherited it. During the agrarian reform in the early 1960s, Cañari indigenous labourers began to become increasingly aware of their unjust treatment and working conditions, leading to confrontations between workers and hacienda administrators.

#### **4.2 The Hacienda in Cañar**

The process of agrarian reform in Ecuador passed through two rounds by different governments in 1964 and 1970.<sup>57</sup> The fact that agricultural improvement failed to occur until this time is noteworthy, as pointed out by Clark (1998). Liberal governments in power from 1895 to 1925 did not attempt to improve indigenous living standards via land redistribution. Rather, they were more focused on obtaining the ‘moral upper hand over conservative highland landowners and the Catholic Church’, whom they thought had monopolised indigenous labour in the sierra, ‘instead of allowing it to flow “naturally” to the agroexport regions of the coast’, where wages were higher (1998: 374).<sup>58</sup> Differences between the coast and highlands were notable; coastal areas had better infrastructure due to a cacao boom at the end of the nineteenth century, in contrast to stagnation in the sierra due to the undynamic hacienda system. This situation did not encouraged immigration and new settlement into the highlands, reducing possibilities for new ideas and economic

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<sup>56</sup> Wars of Independence in the northern part of South America culminated in a break away from Spain in 1822, with the establishment of Gran Colombia under Simón Bolívar, who considered that ‘the new nations of America needed to be relatively large in order to remain economically and politically independent from European Powers’ (de la Torre and Striffler, 2008: 99). Ecuador broke away from the union of Gran Colombia and became an independent country in 1830 (2008: 99). Gran Colombia covered present-day Venezuela, Colombia, Panama and Ecuador. See Bakewell (2004) for further discussion on Simón Bolívar and independence.

<sup>57</sup> See, for example, Deere and Leon (2001), Kay (1998, 2002), and Barraclough (1994) for discussions concerning agrarian reform elsewhere in Latin America, and the causes and outcomes of reform in various countries on the continent.

<sup>58</sup> Hurtado discusses the Liberal period in more detail and highlights the legal reforms implemented that limited the power of the Catholic Church, besides the changes brought about that favoured the indigenous population, such as the abolition of the *concertaje* system in 1918 (2010: 80-81).

exchange to flourish. The continuation of harsh social structures also caused indigenous people to maintain communication in Quichua and find conversation in Spanish difficult. Women did not speak Spanish and nearly all were illiterate (Hurtado, 2010).

Before the end of the 1930s, Cañar was relatively isolated and disconnected from major urban conurbations, especially until the road was finished linking the region to the coastal port of Guayaquil. Trading ties with Quito were rendered problematic by distance and lack of roads. Poor quality land due to erosion at a lower altitude, particularly in the province of Azuay and southern Cañar, meant that subsistence agriculture and mining remained the area's mainstay activities, incorporating most of the population (Balarezo, 1980: 26-27). Therefore, Cañar and Azuay provinces were not great centres of landed estates like those found in the northern sierra. Nonetheless, at higher altitudes suitable for livestock rearing, the hacienda Guantug dominated the rural scene.

### ***Hacienda Guantug***<sup>59</sup>

Hacienda Guantug 'was a huge hacienda, the most famous here in *cantón* Cañar'.<sup>60</sup> It initially belonged to a landowning family in Cuenca, who held land in Cañar from the seventeenth century and had developed a network of estates by the nineteenth.<sup>61</sup> Florencia Astudillo, born in 1869, inherited these landholdings in 1908, managing them by employing administrators rather than her uncles and extended family (Brownrigg, 1972).<sup>62</sup>

Astudillo's properties encompassed three principal haciendas, one being Guantug, the largest. It was subdivided, and included Malal and Quilloac. Hacienda Quilloac covered the most significant land, from 3,600m down to below 3,200m. Smaller haciendas (or annexes) also existed inside Guantug for administrative

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<sup>59</sup> An alternative spelling found within the literature is Huantug

<sup>60</sup> ... *la hacienda era grande, era la mas famosa aquí en Cantón Cañar - la hacienda de Guantug*. Interview: Segundo, Cañar, 3 July 2011

<sup>61</sup> Balarezo suggests that the focus of Cuenca landowners on Cañar is reflected by the poor land found in Azuay province (1980: 28).

<sup>62</sup> While researching the history of Hacienda Guantug via current secondary sources, there appeared to be a discrepancy over the name of the woman who inherited the land in 1908. With further reading it came to light that Brownrigg (1972) had used pseudonyms in her work, hence the initial confusion. For the purposes here, however, I shall follow the woman's real name, Florencia Astudillo. Torres Proaño (2009: 141-154) provides a detailed history on Astudillo, her family, and management of Guantug.



purposes, comprised of San Rafael, La Esperanza, Chuichun and Chuchucan (Brownrigg, 1972). Overall, Guantug extended over around 12,000 hectares (Balarezo, 1980), making up 11.2 per cent of the land surface in Cañar province, and 20 per cent of the *cantón* (Vásquez, 2011).

By the 1960s, a significant proportion of the hacienda remained under-exploited - only around seven per cent was cultivated, with other areas given over to livestock (Balarezo, 1980: 31). The estate produced horses and cattle, cheese, butter, potatoes, barley, wheat, beans, peas, and maize (Brownrigg, 1972), which reflected a lack of specialisation due to limited market integration (Balarezo, 1980: 40).<sup>63</sup>

Given the size of Guantug and the number of workers it required, hierarchical management was complex:

Each division of Huantug was an administrative entity, with a physical center around a residence and storage buildings... Hired administrators, drawn from Cañar's "white" population, lived in these centers. The administrative headquarters of the entire hacienda were located in a complex between the freehold *comuna* of Quilloac and Cañar town. Ranking below the division administrators were a series of *mayorales* who were also rural whites. The lower rung of managers were Indian work bosses... awarded special privileges by [Astudillo], including gifts of land, for faithful service...<sup>64</sup> Peon roles on the estate varied in status, remuneration, and privilege. *Huasipunguero* was not the only status... the *huasipungueros* were in an intermediate status, less privileged than the sharecroppers and more privileged than the *yanaperos* ("helpers") (Brownrigg, 1972: 401-402).

Sharecroppers were only obliged to work for several days a year during harvest. Most were freeholders from adjacent freehold communities. *Huasipungueros*, on the other hand, resided on the hacienda with labour being exchanged for rights to use

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<sup>63</sup> Balarezo comments that the quality of goods from haciendas in Cañar was poor, and that the area lacked capital investment meaning that all the land was intensively worked by hand. Rudimentary tools were used rather than machinery or the introduction of technological improvements (1980: 29, 38-39).

<sup>64</sup> O'Connor argues that an indigenous male might be boosted to the role of *mayoral* based on 'years of experience on the estate, a record of good conduct, or knowledge of Spanish' (2007: 157-158). Nonetheless, such positions also ran the risk of causing conflict between themselves and other indigenous workers, particularly because workers 'relied on each other for economic and social support', causing some people to be wary about taking up the role of *mayoral* due to fear of losing these reciprocal bonds (2007: 158). Cervone notes that on haciendas in Chimborazo province, *mayorales* were responsible for overseeing the seasons of sowing and harvesting, besides giving indigenous workers orders passed on to him from the patron (2012: 45-46).

land, water, wood, etc.<sup>65</sup> *Yanaperos* also exchanged labour for these rights, but their ‘help’ differed from one sub-hacienda to another (Brownrigg, 1972).<sup>66</sup> Therefore, ‘relative status differences and ethnic affiliations divided the communities of Huantug’ (1972: 403).<sup>67</sup> Likewise, the position of administrators and labourers respectively within the hierarchical structure also influenced the size of plots they received (Balarezo, 1980: 60).

The community of Quilloac held the most significant level of sharecropping freeholders, although many villagers also worked on the smaller hacienda of San Rafael. By the 1950s, the *comuna* of Quilloac was a well-organised community:

... a village of about 800 residents on privately-owned housesites interspersed with small fields owned by residents and outside “white” landlords. The occupants of the *huasipungo* plots at its edges were also members of the community. The *comuna* had a president who was responsible to the local political authorities... (Brownrigg, 1972: 409).<sup>68</sup>

Daniel, born in 1943 and an important political indigenous activist from Quilloac, besides being a founding father of ECUARUNARI, explained to me how Quilloac became a hacienda in 1852, but that the community:<sup>69</sup>

... did not lose a piece of land, of around 30 hectares... However given the need for wood, pasture, irrigation and access, we needed to work on the hacienda. The community was divided into two; the hacienda community and the free community. Those in the hacienda were *conciertos*, and the others could come and go. But we had to work the hacienda for the four services we required. Hacienda workers worked all week as a family.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> The word *huasipunguero* is a Quichua word, made up of *huasi* (house) and *pungo* (door). In essence, it was a symbolic word representing the plot of land that an indigenous worker was granted by a landowner (IFAD, 2001: 52).

<sup>66</sup> Cervone (2012: 41) also refers to the term *arrimados* in relation to ‘free’ labour on hacienda estates in the highland province of Chimborazo.

<sup>67</sup> According to Balarezo, there were twelve mayorales on Hacienda Guantug (1980: 43).

<sup>68</sup> What is significant about Comuna Quilloac is that it was referred to as a ‘free comuna’. In other words, it did not fall under the auspices of the Ley de Comunas decreed in 1937 (Torres Proaño, 2009: 140). This latter law, legislated by President Federico Páez, imposed government structures on communities and came after earlier plans from other government administrations that aimed to prevent hacienda invasions and indigenous people regaining land (Becker, 1999).

<sup>69</sup> ECUARUNARI (Confederación de Pueblos de la Nacionalidad Kichwa del Ecuador) is the regional indigenous organisation in the Ecuadorian Andes, belonging to CONAIE (Confederación de Nacionalidades del Ecuador), the national indigenous organisation.

<sup>70</sup> ... *de aquí de la comunidad en Quilloac yo le podría decir entonces desde 1852, entonces la comunidad de Quilloac pasó a ser la hacienda. la comunidad no perdió un pedazo de tierra de mas o menos treinta hectáreas... Pero por cuestión de la leña, pasto, agua de riego, y de sobre los caminos que utilizamos de la hacienda, entre nosotros teníamos que trabajar en la hacienda. La comunidad estaba dividida en dos cosas; la comunidad de la hacienda y la comunidad libre. Entonces la comunidad de la hacienda era peones conciertos, y en cambio la comunidad libre era gente acude que decían. Entonces trabajamos entonces la hacienda por estos cuatro servicios*

It is therefore important to emphasise that there were two classes of community (comuna) in Quilloac. The ‘free’ community, made up of families with small subsistence plots outside the hacienda but relying on the hacienda for services, and the *huasipungo* community having tied contractual labour-land usage agreements with the hacienda (Torres Proaño, 2009: 155).<sup>71</sup> The community and area around Quilloac is evidently important in the history of Cañar, as it emerged as the most organised with a greater level of ‘freedom’ for some villagers during the pre-agrarian reform period. As will be seen, Quilloac also became an increasing sphere of indigenous-based development from the 1950s onwards.

It is said that Astudillo treated the dogs on the hacienda better than her indigenous employees (Brownrigg, 1972). The abuse of indigenous women, particularly by administrators, appeared to be brutal at times:<sup>72</sup>

I remember how our male peers thought we were just for service, that we weren’t a support, and they mistreated us physically, just like the *patrones*. The managers abused the women hard, thinking women had to put up with it. I saw how they hit them.<sup>73</sup>

My grandmother was part of the hacienda period. She told me ... that if they didn’t carry out the work, that they would be hit. And that at times the *patrones* would abuse the women and they would have children by them.<sup>74</sup> And that she [the abused woman] would be a single mother as no indigenous man wanted to marry her. Two women that she knew had died due to the mistreatment of the *patrones*, as they only liked the women to be with them and no one else, i.e. indigenous men. They tied one of them up. My grandmother had been working, and she saw her feet being tied and dragged by a horse, and they

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*que nosotros ocupamos. Y en cambio la comunidad de la hacienda trabajaba lunes a viernes, casi toda la familia.* Interview: Daniel, Cañar, 14 July 2011.

<sup>71</sup> Daniel was from the ‘free’ *comuna*.

<sup>72</sup> Inheritance patterns in the pre-columbian Andes were influenced by ‘corresponding gender markers’ – i.e. male and female. There was a rule of ‘cross-transmission’, through which the relations between a mother’s brother and sister’s son, or a father’s sister and brother’s daughter, would determine the patterns of inheritance. Spanish law dictated that Andean customs regarding women and their right to land were incorrect, and that women who were married were minors in the eyes of the law. This meant that women lost their autonomous right to inheritance, as inheritance rights became joint property of both partners upon marriage (Silverblatt, 1980).

<sup>73</sup> *Eso sí que yo llevo recordando. Pensaba que nuestros compañeros pensaban que las mujeres somos como una carga, de servicio. Esa consideración creo que, pienso que han tenido, no es un apoyo. Las maltrataban así biológicamente, físicamente, igual que los patrones. Los patrones maltrataban a mujeres. Les daban duro, así, ellos pensaron que las mujeres, también tienen que aguantar así. Yo lo sabía ver cómo le pegaban.* Interview: Nuna, Cañar, 7 July 2011

<sup>74</sup> Lyons (2006: 167-180) provides a detailed narrative of an indigenous woman concerning the physical abuse of hacienda owners towards indigenous women.

found that she had died. And it was due to the patron's jealousy of her being with someone else.<sup>75</sup>

Participants also noted the strength of indigenous women on the hacienda.<sup>76</sup> For example, Daniel recounted how, when he saw that his sister had been beaten, he began an argument with the *mayorales* that resulted in a physical battle between five indigenous people and several administrators: 'we did not know what to do... we were like rats, running between the horses. And then, three or four women appeared at the top of the hill with hundreds of rocks. They took out 50 per cent of the *mayorales*. They saved us. Cañari women are very brave'.<sup>77</sup> Nearly every one referred to how women carried out 'servant' like tasks, not only working in agriculture, but also preparing food for their husbands, maintaining the household and tending to small animals. While much of women's work was considered as 'slavery', there was also an awareness of how women kept going, despite the hardship.<sup>78</sup> Daniel explained how differences in women's work depended on their familial position and status:

Nearly all wives of *peones* / *huasipungueros* worked on the hacienda without earning a cent. In contrast, in the free *comunas*, women attended to the home and had a little more freedom. They could work their small plot or be with the children. Many women had the advantage of the hacienda, in which we could have 40 to 50 sheep grazing. Women in the free *comunas* would also go and work on the hacienda, collecting potatoes etc. The only thing they didn't

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<sup>75</sup> *Mi abuela era parte de la época de la hacienda. Me contaba ... que si es que no cumplía con las tareas, que había mandado el patrón, que les castigaban decía ella... y que a veces también mujeres eran abusadas por los patrones, y que tenían hijos de los patrones, decía. Y principalmente ella se quedaba como madre soltera porque ya nadie de los indígenas quería casar con ellas... dos mujeres que ellas conocían habían fallecido por maltratos del patrón, porque ellos les gustaban solo que estén con ellos y que no estén con nadie más. En este caso con los indígenas... una de ellas les había amarrado así. Ella me dijo así que había estado ella trabajando y que le habían amarrado con una soga en el pié y le han arrastrado con caballo, y que le habían encontrado muerta... y era porqué por celos del patrón, que no quería que esté con nadie.* Interview: Nina, Cañar, 3 July 2011.

<sup>76</sup> O'Connor suggests that the hierarchy found on haciendas generally discriminated against indigenous women more than indigenous men, meaning that 'the transition from life in peasant communities to haciendas was quite different, and much harder, for them' (2007: 155).

<sup>77</sup> *Entonces nosotros no sabíamos qué hacer... nosotros estábamos como ratas, corriendo dentro del caballo de una lado y del otro. Y entonces las mujeres, cuatro mujeres aparecen sobre una loma con una millón de piedras, y se tomó casi 50 por ciento de los mayores. Y nosotros, nos salvó a nosotros. Entonces las mujeres cañaris son bien valientes.* Interview: Cañar, 14 July 2011. I was told about this incident by several participants, suggesting that it was a significant event.

<sup>78</sup> O'Connor highlights how specific female tasks, such as spinning wool, collecting water or food preparation provided indigenous women with other women's company at times, allowing them to socialise besides working, which also developed intra-community relationships and communication (2007: 138).

do was harvest wheat; I have never seen a woman do that. But I have seen a female majority in the harvesting of potatoes, as they seem better at it.<sup>79</sup>

Likewise, Mama Shulla told me how she was liked by the *patrones* as she was considered as a ‘good’ worker:<sup>80</sup>

When I was little I did everything, went anywhere, with others to harvest potatoes etc,... harvesting grains, maize, peas, brining potatoes down from the mountains... They treated me like a boy as I was the eldest, and made me work hard. When my younger brothers grew up, they got married and left. I stayed with my parents... the *patrones* liked me on the hacienda as I was hardworking. I had to collect milk from the cows, and when I went to sell it in town I would be given a bag of rice to take home, or two litres of milk when I went to fetch it from the cattle. Only given to me, for looking after the animals and land well. My parents taught me how to work hard... I helped build adobes, putting the roofs on houses, even with a sleeping baby on my back. I built some of the houses for *patrones*... I knew how to work well with the men. Some said I didn’t seem like a woman, but more like a man for the strength that I had.<sup>81</sup>

Also noteworthy were participant’s reflections on access to education on the hacienda. Access to formal education was limited for the indigenous population

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<sup>79</sup> ... de los peones conciertos, así cuestión de de mujeres, casi trabajaban todas ellas en la hacienda sin ganar un sólo centavo. En cambio, de las comunas libres, entonces las comunas libres entonces en cambio las mujeres entonces atendían el el la atención del hogar y entonces eran un poco más más libres. Y entonces trabajaban ellos su pequeña parcela, entonces estaban con los hijos y mucha mucho muchas mujeres entonces por ejemplo la el la ventaja de la hacienda era para las comunas libres y nosotros podíamos tener el 30, 40, 50 unidades de borrego, entonces ellas pastaban. Y muchas de las veces también las mujeres de las comunas libres también sabían trabajar en la hacienda por ejemplo, en el saque de papas, en la de sierva, entonces trabajaban ellas en la hacienda también. Entonces lo único no no trabajaban era en la cosecha de trigo. Entonces ahí nunca he visto una mujer que vaya a cortar el trigo ¿no? Y entonces pero en otros trabajos, entonces por ejemplo caso del saque de papas, entonces más las mujeres. Entonces porque ellas tienen más habilidades de recoger papas ¿no? Entonces en eso era el trabajo de las mujeres en esa época. Interview: Cañar, 14 July 2011.

<sup>80</sup> Mama Shulla did not know which year she was born due to lack of paperwork or documentation during the pre-Agrarian Reform era, and thus she did not know her age either. Yet, by approximation, she was in her seventies at the time of interview on 16 July 2011.

<sup>81</sup> ... cuando era pequeña hacía de todo y que iba a así a trabajar en donde sea, llevarse con otras personas, iba a coger papas, todo eso. Iba a los cerros, hacía tocar allí... A chalar así todo granos, dice maíz, dice alverja, todo eso. Que iba hacía trabajar, así chalando eso, por los cerros dice y que traía eso a los papás... Me tenían como, como, como a un hombre. Porque era la mayor y tenían más o menos como a un hombre así. Me hacían trabajar más duro que a los demás, los hermanos más, más pequeños cuando hacían un poco grandes ya, ya se casaban y ya se iban. Y quedé con los papás... Los patrones, los jefes me querían bien porque era trabajadora... cuando tenía, así sacaba leche de las haciendas, de las vacas, ahí cuando iba a vender la leche en el centro, a Cañar, me daban arroz o lo que sea y ya me mandaban. Cuando iba a sacar leche a las vacas ya me daban dos litros de leche, lo que sea. Solo a mi para que cuide bien los animales, que cuide los sembradíos. A los otros trabajadores solo a veces les daban almuerzo de ahí. Y, si no, de ahí solo a ella le daban así leche, sacos de papas porque era bien trabajadora. Sí, porque los papás le enseñaron a trabajar duro. He solido hacer casas. He solido así hacer adobes para hacer las casas. He hecho algunas casas de los patrones. Con un bebé he estado, cargado un bebé pero igual he sabido a dejarle durmiendo y subir a poner las tejas en las casas. Me ha sabido decir que no parece mujer, parece un hombre por la fuerza que tenía. Interview: Shulla, Cañar, 16 July 2011.

during this time. It was considered accessible only by the white or mestizo sectors of society:

My grandmother lived during the hacienda period. They had to work for the hacienda... they didn't let them study. Including men. Because they said that the indigenous didn't have the capacity to study. They told them that the *mestizo* people, yes. I understand that they didn't finish primary school. I think my grandfather went up to first grade, no further. My grandmother, no. They lived serving the *patrones* on the hacienda.<sup>82</sup>

Many people in the community thought the same, they thought they were just for work, that it was more important than education, that a hard worker was seen better by others... so work was the priority. Little importance was given to education... I guess the fear of the managers was that the indigenous people would learn many things, and feared that they would rebel against the hacienda.<sup>83</sup>

For indigenous families who were fortunate enough to obtain what little educational opportunities they could, boys were favoured over girls:

School? No, no, they never put me in school. They only put my brother in school, as he was a male. They didn't put girls in school.... If they had put me in school I would have read all my father's books, but as they didn't, then none. My mother never went to school either.<sup>84</sup>

My mother, as she was the oldest, it was equally hard work with her father. She didn't enter school, nothing. Maybe to first grade but no more than that... Her father put him [her brother] in school, because during that time they didn't want to put girls in. They only thought boys needed to go to school. So all my mothers' sisters haven't been to school. They went straight out to work in agriculture.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> *De mi abuelita--Qué más--vivía más antes había en las haciendas. Que ellos tenían que trabajar para las haciendas. Así mismo que no les permitían estudiar. / ¿Ni hombres tampoco? / Ni hombres tampoco, sí. No, porque decían que los indígenas no, no estaban en esa capacidad de estudiar. Decían la gente mestiza pero... creo que ellos no habían terminado la primaria. Creo que mi abuelito, creo que habían entrado hasta primer grado, nada más. Mi abuelita no. Además vivían sirviendo a los patrones que decían en las haciendas y nada más.* Interview: Nuria, Cañar, 20 June 2011.

<sup>83</sup> .... mucha gentecita de la comunidad lo mismo, se pensaba en esa época era el trabajo, era mas sobre saliente de la educación, miente la persona o sea aprendía trabajar, ir en cualquier parte, bien visto... Entonces era mas considerado el trabajo. Poca importancia la educación porque no se pensaba. ... la sistema de la hacienda mismo exigía en ese tiempo, exigía solo trabajo y nada para los indígenas... A lo mejor el temor de los hacendados eran, los indígenas iban aprendiendo muchas cosas y tenían el miedo de revelarse contra a la hacienda. Interview: Segundo, Cañar, 3 July 2011.

<sup>84</sup> *Escuela, no, no me pusieron en escuela. Ah, mi hermano nada más le pusieron en escuela porque era varón. Y a las mujeres no las ponían en la escuela... si me hubiesen puesto en la escuela hubiera leído los libros de mi papá, pero como no me pusieron, pues ya nada. Mi mamá de tampoco ha estado en la escuela.* Interview: Shulla, Cañar, 16 July 2011.

<sup>85</sup> *Mi mama, como era la hija mayor, era trabajo duro igual con el papá. Ella no, no entró a la escuela ella, nada ya. Parece que entró al primer grado pero no más de eso... A él si le puso en la escuela, el papá, porque en ese tiempo entonces a las mujeres no le querían poner en escuela, solo pensaban ellos que solo los varones necesitaban de entrar en la escuela, y las mujeres nada. Y entonces todas las hermanas de mi mami no, no han*

Before, girls weren't given importance. I remember my father saying, 'no, no, they're only worth working the pasture'. But in contrast, with me, I'm not sure why, maybe as I'm the only boy, my father focused on me knowing how to write. When I was in third grade he called me, saying 'sit, take this book, read'. When I read he was very happy. But no importance was given to my sisters.<sup>86</sup>

Not only was there discrimination within the hacienda structure towards the indigenous people vis-à-vis work and education, there was also gender subordination towards women at a familial level.<sup>87</sup> Importantly, indigenous women's access to land at this time came about as a result of being married, but they received no reward for their time or work. Widows of *huasipungueros* had a range of responsibilities: 'widows of *peones conciertos* worked in livestock, in domestic service, looking after the hacienda'.<sup>88</sup>

Economic crisis in the 1930s and 1940s had pervaded the country, accompanied by political instability. Highland landowners in the 1930s found it difficult to maintain production and profit through the internal market and there were rising prices of food in urban settlements (Clark, 1998). During this time debate began to occur concerning agrarian problems in the highlands, particularly as conflicts on haciendas had become more frequent. These were most notable in the northern sierra where the largest haciendas were located, predominately on estates

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*entrado en la escuela ellas. Directamente salieron a ir con los borregos a los cerros, con los animales a trabajar así en la agricultura, así.* Interview: Ima, Cañar, 7 June 2011.

<sup>86</sup> *Antes no le daba importancia a la mujer, y entonces yo me recuerdo mi papá me decía, no, no, ellas valen para pastar, las mujeres. Pero en cambio a mí, no sé por qué, fue único hijo. Mucho se ocupaba mi papá, que tienes que saber escribir. Por ejemplo cuando yo estaba de tercer grado entonces a mí me llamaba, decía 'venga siéntate, tenga este libro, lea'. Entonces cuando yo lo leo era una alegría para él. Pero para mis hermanas no se daba importancia.* Interview: Daniel, Cañar, 14 July 2011.

<sup>87</sup> This lack of access to education for the indigenous populations that worked on the haciendas became a key priority for a number of influential indigenous leaders in the early 1940s. The two main protagonists were Dolores Cacuango and Tránsito Amaguaña, born on to haciendas in the area around Cayambe in the northern province of Pichincha. While acting as leader of the Ecuadorian Indigenous Federation (EIF), illiterate Dolores decided to establish schools with the help of Tránsito Amaguaña and others, for indigenous children where they would be taught both Kichuwa and Spanish (Rodas, 2007; Bernal Carrera, 2007). Dolores and Tránsito are considered to be the precursors to bilingual education in Ecuador (Becker 2003: 132). They set in motion the concept of formal education within the indigenous mind, and began to alter the attitudes towards education within the indigenous communities.

<sup>88</sup> *Por ejemplo las mujeres en cuestión de peones concierto, entonces había algunas viudas mujeres. Entonces las viudas mujeres trabajaban es entonces en la ganadería. Entonces trabajaban en servicios domiciliarios, y entonces ellos trabajaban en cuidado de la hacienda. Eso era el trabajo de las mujeres viudas.* Interview: Daniel, Cañar, 14 July 2011.

O'Connor notes that widows on haciendas were only occasionally given land rights after husbands died (2007: 200).

owned by the church and educational institutions via the Asistencia Social (Clark, 1998: 379). By the mid-1950s, ‘the distribution of agricultural land in Ecuador [was] one of the most unequal’ in Latin America (Blankstein and Zuvekas Jr., 1973: 74).<sup>89</sup>

### ***4.3 Agrarian Reform in Cañar and Space for Indigenous Development***

When Astudillo died in 1956, rather than leaving hacienda Guantug to her nieces and nephews, she requested that it be bequeathed to the Church with stipulations that it be used for educational and social causes (Brownrigg, 1972: 406-407). A substantial amount of property and funds were bequest to the Madres del Cristo Rey nuns in Cuenca, who subsequently administered the hacienda via Cuencan aristocratic gentlemen and replaced the Indian *mayorales* with ‘Spanish speaking rural “whites”’ (1972: 407). The latter were from the Cañar bourgeoisie (Balarezo, 1980: 37). In 1964, hacienda Guantug ‘became one of the three Church properties in the nation designated for expropriation’ (Brownrigg, 1972: 410).<sup>90</sup> While this announcement did not disturb the nuns given they would receive ample compensation, it did threaten the rural white hierarchy in Cañar (Brownrigg, 1972). During the years that followed the transition from private to church ownership, the appearance of external organisations in Cañar generated consciousness-raising over inequalities of land and labour within indigenous communities. This led to several protagonists challenging the hacienda system. Most notably, these organisations were the Misión Andina (MAE) and the Peace Corps.

In 1956, the Misión Andina (Andean Mission in Ecuador; MAE) began working in the Ecuadorian highlands. Designed by the United Nations and funded by the International Labour Organization (ILO), it had ambitious development goals to ‘improve the working conditions within the indigenous population’ (Bretón, 2001:

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<sup>89</sup> For a pioneering study of agrarian conditions in Ecuador immediately prior to agrarian reform, see the CIDA study headed by Rafael Baraona, *Tenencia de la tierra y desarrollo socio-económico del sector agrícola* (Washington: Organization of American States, 1965).

<sup>90</sup> On 23 July 1964, a Law of Agrarian Reform and Colonization was disseminated and the Ecuadorian Agrarian Reform and Colonization Institute (IERAC) was inaugurated to oversee the law, as a semi-autonomous unit. The law required that the *huasipungo* system be abolished and be replaced by modern forms of direct management via cooperatives or enterprises. It also stated that living conditions needed to be improved via ownership of land, besides instituting satisfactory minimum wages, sharing of enterprise profits, and providing farming extension services. Farm workers also needed to be incorporated into the social security system (Blankstein and Zuvekas Jr., 1973: 78-79).



65).<sup>91</sup> Addressing issues such as community development, health, farming assistance, training in craftwork, rural industry, civil engineering, social services and the training of personnel (Torres, 2005), the MAE covered 161 communities in Andean Ecuador, eleven per cent of which were in Cañar (Martínez, 2002: 197).<sup>92</sup> Shortly after commencing work in Cañar (1960), it began in Quinuapata community and then in Quilloac in 1962 (Quindi and Solano, n. d.). Tayta Miguel, born in 1923 into a freeholder family in Quilloac, was an early instigator of indigenous mobilisation for land ‘as soon as he heard the hacienda might be sold’ (Adams, 1969: 4). He ‘came to learn a little about the agrarian reform’ via the MAE (1969: 4). Daniel explained:

The young men who got involved in the Mission were on the left, and so they worked in the communities with us, in the countryside, even telling us what was going to happen. They knew agrarian reform was coming. So they helped us move forward by informing us that the haciendas were to be broken up. Therefore, we took up the bat and began to organise. Leftist young men began infiltrating the communities. With knowledge of agrarian reform, we began to organise the free *comuna*.<sup>93</sup>

Miguel had become the leader of *comuna* Quilloac in the early 1960s, as the hacienda system began to destabilise. He came into direct contact with the MAE, through which his brother and he received training in indigenous leadership in Riobamba. With the Mission’s aid, Miguel was able to organise community assemblies with the objective of bringing a collective together to focus on establishing legal status for the *comuna* and carrying out rural development projects, such as opening up the road between hacienda Guantug and the *comuna* Quilloac (Pichazaca, 2005-2009). A medical post and school were also created; the latter built on land obtained from the nuns. This area subsequently became Quilloac’s centre of organisation (Brownrigg, 1972: 409-410).

Not only did the MAE help generate infrastructural aids and organisational activity amongst the Cañari, it also developed ‘handicraft projects and breeding of

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<sup>91</sup> See Bretón (2001), Conejo (2008), Flores Carlos (2005a), Martínez (2002) and Torres (2005) for further information on the work of the MAE.

<sup>92</sup> Bretón notes that the MAE’s initiative was ‘the first in Ecuador to promote systematic improvements in the quality of everyday life for indigenous communities’ (2008: 587).

<sup>93</sup> *Los muchachos, gente joven, se metieron en la misión andina. Entonces ya eran de la izquierda. Entonces esa gente en cambio, como trabajaban con nosotros con en el campo en el área rural, mejor dicho, incluso iban contando que va a ocurrir. Entonces ellos ya sabían que en el Ecuador va a dar la reforma agraria. Entonces ellos adelantaron un poco informar que va a parcelarse las haciendas. Entonces allí es que nosotros tomamos la batuta, iniciamos la organización. Los muchachos gente de la izquierda empezó a infiltrar en las comunidades. Entonces nosotros estábamos informados que va a haber reforma agraria, empezamos a organizar la comuna libre.* Interview: Cañar, 14 July 2011.

small animals, support for women in sheep rearing and seeds to grow vegetables. Some women began to organise themselves'.<sup>94</sup> It also sent community members, such as Segundo, to a weaving course in Chimborazo via its scholarship programme.<sup>95</sup> The MAE by this point had 'begun more progressive educational projects' (Brownrigg, 1972: 408), further explained by Miguel's younger brother Segundo (born in 1948):<sup>96</sup>

The Andean Mission also had scholarships to prepare indigenous teachers, with teaching centres in Chimborazo province, to train young people in handicrafts, carpentry, weaving. And for young women, it was in nursing assistantship. There was a lot of promotion here.<sup>97</sup>

Alongside the MAE, in January 1962, 38 Peace Corps volunteers arrived in Ecuador. The establishment of the Peace Corps in the USA ran congruent to the Alliance for Progress.<sup>98</sup> Across the continent, the assignment for the Peace Corps organisation was 'to further peaceful social change through community development' (Cobbs Hoffman, 2000: 66).<sup>99</sup> In Cañar, the Peace Corps presence

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<sup>94</sup> ... daban proyectos de artesanía y de crianza de animales menores. Así que había apoyo para las mujeres, dar un borrego, dar semillas, hortalizas para que comiencen a sembrar. Entonces ya ahí pocas, algunas mujeres aquí, han comenzado a organizarse. Interview: Tamaya, Cañar, 10 July 2011.

<sup>95</sup> Interview: Segundo, Cañar, 3 July 2011.

<sup>96</sup> The MAE also developed Spanish literacy programmes aimed at the Kichuwa speaking population, producing alphabet books to help with reading in the Kichuwa language concerning culturally relevant subjects such as mythology, social aspects and other issues related to the natural world (Conejo, 2008). In relation to indigenous women in Riobamba, Tuaza (2013) notes how the MAE gave them opportunity to study and finish primary school.

<sup>97</sup> Ese tiempo creo que la Misión Andina mismo tenía cupos de becas para prepararse para maestros indígenas. Tenían centros de capacitación en provincia de Chimborazo para preparar a jóvenes, para artesanía, para tejidos, para carpintería. Y para señoritas era el auxiliar enfermería. Había bastante promoción en ese tiempo para adentro de la Misión Andina. Interview: Segundo, Cañar, 3 July 2011.

<sup>98</sup> The Alliance for Progress was generated as a result of growing fears within the developed world that there would be a 'spread of revolution to other countries in the region and the spectre of socialism' (Kay, 1998: 11), following the Cuban Revolution of 1959. The Cuban Revolution sparked land-restructuring policies in Latin America to be influenced by external actors, particularly the USA. The Alliance 'was the biggest U.S. aid program toward the developing world' (Johnson, n. d.). It was seen as a method to increase capitalist growth, promote democracy, help finance reforms to improve living standards of the poor, besides an attempt to reinforce relations between the USA and its southern neighbours (Johnson, n. d.). The extent to which the alliance achieved its goals, or not, is discussed elsewhere (Livingston, 2009; Schemun, 1988), yet it is noted that several countries in Latin America, including Chile, Peru, Ecuador and Colombia, subsequently undertook agrarian reforms as a consequence (Kay, 1998: 11).

<sup>99</sup> Working in local communities, volunteers aimed to aid in the creation and/or strengthening of local institutions outside of local government and the private sector, in order to help local people make demands of bureaucracies for their own needs. The organisation viewed itself as a 'people-to-people program that would have a direct impact on the real future of Latin America' (Sharp, 1988: 186).

around the time of agrarian reform assisted indigenous communities and their leaders to work through some of the problems they faced and find solutions to achieve their goals over land acquisition. The Peace Corps helped send Miguel from Quilloac to the Tennessee Valley in the USA. Here Miguel witnessed progress concerning land and economic productivity on Indian Reservations, large estates and in co-operatives, which ‘opened him up to think of the impossible’ (Adams, 1969: 7).<sup>100</sup> Initially, Miguel felt disillusioned by the possibilities of those in the North, there being a marked contrast to the co-operative in Cañar, which lacked economic capital to pay for land, and had to fight against an oligarchy that wished to keep the cooperative structure ineffective. Miguel was pressured by his peers to teach them something he had learnt on his trip. In turn, Miguel began campaigning to reduce the cost of land (Adams, 1969).

In 1964, the Ecuadorian Agrarian Reform and Colonization Institute (IERAC) visited Quilloac with a lawyer. They wished to recruit *comuna* members for a month-long course on agrarian reform and cooperative development at the MAE’s centre in Guaslan.<sup>101</sup> The Quilloac president and other Cañari attended, including Daniel, returning to Cañar and their communities to explain about land reform, cooperativism, and the process that was required in order to create a pre-cooperative to request a division of land. The pre-cooperative would be a legal body that would later become a ‘corporate cooperative owner collectively responsible for payment of the lands they received’ (Brownrigg, 1972: 411). As Daniel explained to me further:

... the Law of Agrarian Reform opened up the door for the peasant communities to organise themselves in pre-cooperatives. So that was the opportunity to organise. For example, the government did not want to know anything about the *comunidades*, because up until then the *comunidades* had had legal status and many communities were legally recognised by the state. But the government did not want to know anything about this. By this I say that they had to create cooperatives. And why? Because they were thinking in the capitalist system. They wanted us to form cooperatives within the national market. That was the intention, so for that reason the state required that pre-

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<sup>100</sup> Daniel also told me that he had been sent to the USA to teach Quichua to forthcoming Peace Corps volunteers (Interview: Cañar, 14 July 2011).

<sup>101</sup> By the 1960s, the MAE had gained in status and was incorporated into the state’s political structure as the National Programme for Rural Development in 1961 (Flores Carlos, 2005), a result also influenced by the loss of international support (Brownrigg, 1972: 408). The MAE was nationalised by the military junta in 1964 and made responsible for the implementation of rural development as part of the National Development Plan (Torres, 2005). The Mission was integrated into the Ministry of Agriculture at the beginning of the 1970s and later disappeared (Conejo, 2008).

cooperatives and cooperatives be formed. In this way, we mobilised, and began to fight for the land. We began to confront the hacienda, especially the administrators.<sup>102</sup>

Pre-cooperatives were created in various indigenous communities on Guantug, with land petitioning organised. This mobilisation was attributed to the presence of the MAE, Peace Corps and individuals trained in cooperativism. However, members of the oligarchy and hacienda administrators accused those involved of being ‘communist’. While those in Quilloac for example, who had sharecropping arrangements on Guantug, had their contracts cancelled. *Huasipungueros* and *yanaperos* were threatened even further, and if they joined the ‘communist’ mobilisation risked losing their hacienda privileges. Given this pressure, very few tenant farmers joined the pre-cooperative (Brownrigg, 1972).

In 1967, IERAC mediated the division of hacienda Guantug.<sup>103</sup> A wealthy and influential *cuencano*, who was a trustee of Church properties, was assigned the job of negotiating the sale of Guantug to IERAC (Brownrigg, 1972). IERAC bought the hacienda at a high price, and consequently had to sell it on at a high price, so that only rich people could buy the best land – for around \$1000 per hectare (Adams, 1969: 5). Adams, a Peace Corp volunteer in Cañar in the mid-to-late 1960s, reflected on the land distribution of Guantug:

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<sup>102</sup> ... la ley de reforma agraria, entonces abre la puerta, es que las comunidades campesinas tenían que organizarse en pre cooperativa en cooperativa. Entonces hubo ese chance de organizarlo. Entonces por ejemplo, el gobierno no quiso saber nada de las comunas, porque hasta ese entonces ya las comunas tenían a la personería jurídica y estaban legalmente reconocidos por el estado, muchas comunidades en el Ecuador. Pero el gobierno no no quiso saber nada de eso. Entonces dijo que tienen que organizar las cooperativas, o sea, ¿por qué eso? Porque ellos estaban pensando en sistema capitalista. O sea, a nosotros, quiso es que se formen cooperativa, entonces esa cooperativa dentro al mercado nacional. Entonces eso era la intención, entonces por tal razón entonces el mismo estado exigió que se forme pre cooperativa y cooperativas. Entonces de esa manera organizamos, y entonces empezamos a luchar por la tierra. Entonces empezamos a enfrentarse con la hacienda. Entonces, especialmente con los mayordomos. Interview: Cañar, 14 July 2011.

<sup>103</sup> IERAC was responsible for redistributing: unused public lands relinquished to it under the law; over seventy Asistencia Social haciendas, which had been previously taken from the church in 1908; underused private land subject to expropriation; and areas that would return to IERAC if unexploited for ten years. Possession of land was to be paid by IERAC using special reform bonds, which were to be exempt from tax and provide as a guarantee for loans from the Banco Nacional de Fomento or conducting business with other public bodies. Land was to be sold at a price believed to correspond to its productive capacity, besides consideration of the recipient's capability to pay IERAC for the land over a period of 15-30 years. When dividing up the *huasipungo*, the law stipulated that if a tenant had worked his plot for ten years he did not have to pay anything and was entitled to it for free from the landowner. If it had been worked for more than ten years, the landowner had to pay the *huasipunguero* for his time after the tenth year. If the plot had been worked for less than ten years, then the tenant was responsible for repaying an amount to the landowner inline with the years worked. Reimbursement then had to be determined by IERAC (Blankstein and Zuvekas Jr., 1973: 79-81).

The land is good, but lack of water and primitive farming practices keep production down. The people who bought it are would-be feudal lords, they play like they are big landowners with lots of workers and drive the worker like they used to be driven on real haciendas. There is never a shortage of workers to work for their low wages because those who didn't enter the co-op have very little land to work and are pressed for work. Besides, many are more comfortable in the traditional roles. For those who like the past, some of it can still be had. All the members of the cooperative got small plots of land of three or four hectares each to farm and all seemed well.<sup>104</sup> They would pay off their individual debts and the collective debt for the land that was given for collective use. They were to get 2,000 hectares of high altitude land to be worked in common if it could be used. But things couldn't go as smoothly as that... (1969: 5).

Daniel briefly explained what happened:

... the IERAC acted badly. I mean, the IERAC intervened in the haciendas, but didn't deliver everything to us. For example, in the case of hacienda Chuchichun, they passed it on to others in the next county... All the land at a distance from here, it was not given to the hacienda workers but to men in the centre of Cañar. So, the agrarian reform did not act honestly. Moreover it entered as a dealer of land. It gave all the good land to other people who had nothing to do with agriculture.<sup>105</sup>

IERAC gave approximately 32 hectares of land, which should have belonged to Quilloac cooperative, to a *mestizo* community. Adams explains that 'this riled the people of Quilloac so much that they went up to the land with sticks and machetes to kill the IERAC engineer. They succeeded in giving him a good beating which caused quite a stir in the town... (1969: 5). This incident was significant, as the indigenous people openly challenged various authorities, including the local priest, who in this case supported the mestizos. The indigenous Cañaris therefore rebelled in order 'to protect their rights as they saw them' (Adams, 1969: 6).<sup>106</sup> When the Quilloac leaders complained at the IERAC office in Cuenca, Daniel was threatened with five years' imprisonment. However, Daniel:

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<sup>104</sup> Quindi and Solano note that the IERAC obliged the Cañari to become *minifundistas*, as it believed four to eight hectares was sufficient to meet the subsistence demands of a family (n. d.: 9).

<sup>105</sup> ... *el IERAC también actuó mal. O sea, intervino el IERAC en las haciendas pero no entregó todo a nosotros. Por ejemplo, el caso de Chuchichun, la hacienda de Chuchichun, entregó a cierta gente del cantón Tambo. Igual aquí, todo este terreno, entonces a distancia, no entregaron a gente trabajadora en la hacienda sino que entregaron a los señores de centro de Cañar. Entonces la reforma agraria no actuó honestamente. Reforma agraria más bien entró en negocio--negociante de la tierra. Entre todas las tierras buenas, entonces empezó a entregar a otra gente que nada tiene que ver nada con la agricultura.* Interview: Cañar, 14 July 2011.

<sup>106</sup> Two perspectives on the reform emerge in the literature: while Murmis (1982) emphasises the proactive role of highland landowners, other authors stress peasant agency and mobilisation from below (Chiriboga, 1989; Thurner, 1993).

... defended himself well, pointing out that if he deserved five years, he knew a lot of people in IERAC who deserved more. He claimed that every man has the right to defend his land from thieves. The fact that he defended himself before a high white official marked that a change was coming over the people of the area, and the official was a little afraid (Adams, 1969: 6).

In addition to Miguel, Daniel was also an important figure in the Cañari fight for land. It is thought that, after Daniel's father died when Daniel was thirteen, Miguel became a role model to him, particularly as there was a significant age gap between them (Adams, 1969). Daniel said:

I suffered in the hacienda. I saw how people were mistreated. So I had the courage through annoyance to say, "one day, we will be free"... From that point forwards we began to organise... We would walk about at night, me with a bottle of liquor, going from house to house, giving a cup of *trago*, and convincing the people to participate in the organisation. In doing so, by around 1965, we had become organised.<sup>107</sup>

Besides Miguel, another significant influence on Daniel's activist character was Monsignor Leonidas Proaño, Catholic Bishop of Riobamba. Proaño was known as the 'Bishop of Indians' (Becker, 2008: 146) due to his 'persistent fight in the defence of indigenous rights' (Vélez, 2008: 105). Lyons explains how Proaño, born into a family 'who wove straw hats and cultivated a small plot' (2006: 262), connected with peasant and indigenous communities in ways unfamiliar to other bishops. Appointed bishop in 1954 (Luliano y Laeguizamon, 2011), while travelling around his diocese Proaño was horrified at the poverty he witnessed (Lyons, 2006: 262). With a growing level of mobilisation and organisation amongst leftist groups and protestant missionaries, Proaño felt he needed to increase the role of the Catholic Church beyond doctrine and conversion: 'He decided to devote his attentions above all to the indigenous peasantry and began to take steps orientated towards material as well as spiritual improvements' (2006: 262).

Between 1959 and 1962, Proaño led an initiative that aimed to help literacy within the Kichuwa speaking populations. He created a programme called the Escuelas Radiofónicas Populares de Riobamba (Popular Radio Schools of

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<sup>107</sup> ... *yo sufrí en la hacienda. Yo lo vi como maltrataban a la gente. Entonces tenía ese, ese coraje, esa molestia de decir, "algún día vamos a ser libres" ¿pues no?... desde esa época empezamos a organizar entonces... nosotros andábamos por la noche. He llevado una botella de trago. Entonces en cada casa llegamos y damos una copita de trago, y entonces convencemos a la gente que participe con la organización. Entonces de esa manera es que nosotros organizamos casi hasta, hasta más o menos 1965, entonces ya estábamos organizados.* Interview: Cañar, 14 July 2011.

Riobamba, ERP). Proaño observed the levels of illiteracy within rural areas, and made reference to the experience of Monsignor Joaquin Salcedo in Colombia with Radio Sutatenza (Luliano and Leguizamón, 2011). The ERP aimed to teach indigenous people to read and write in Kichuwa and become more “aware”. The programme was based on Paulo Freire’s philosophy of educational liberation (Flores Carlos, 2005b):

The objective of the Escuelas Radiofónicas de Riobamba was to organise literary campaigns via radio; to instruct popular classes in core subjects for their development and incorporate the indigenous peasant into the social and economic life of the nation (Yáñez, 1998: 35).<sup>108</sup>

The idea of educational radio programmes in Latin America is linked to the liberation theology wing of the Catholic Church (Luliano and Leguizamón, 2011). Proaño was an active member of the Latin American Council of Bishops, participating in the Second Vatican Council under Pope John XXIII’s, in the early 1960s. This experience altered Proaño’s outlook.<sup>109</sup> The topic of liberation theology

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<sup>108</sup> Educational programmes were transmitted in the mornings and evenings, times when people met together and listened to the radio. A facilitator worked with the people to develop the topics discussed each day after the end of each airing (Luliano and Leguizamón, 2011). Torres states that the ‘purpose of using the mother tongue was conscientization rather than its use in education’ (2005: 25); yet the ERP was so successful that more than 10,000 people became literate through it (Flores Carlos, 2005; Luliano and Leguizamón, 2011). As such, this accomplishment later helped form the Escuela Radiofónicas Populares del Ecuador, ERPE, which remains today (Luliano and Leguizamón, 2011.) Towards the 1970s, Proaño’s programme was also being implemented in the Amazon region through the Sistema Radiofónica Shuar, later known as Plan Integral de Escuelas Radiofónicas Shuar. In 1975 the ERPE developed further with the introduction of Teleducación, which was established over ten years, but terminated in 1985 (Luliano and Leguizamón, 2011). Proaño’s legacy in consciousness-raising, teaching and literacy education is seen via other literacy campaigns in Ecuador, such as the Campaña Nacional de Alfabetización “Monseñor Leonidas Proaño” (1988-1990), implemented by the Ministry of Education with the UN Declaration of Human Rights used as the main content. This was followed by an “Ecuador Studies” Programme, and subsequently with a regular Adult Basic Education programme (Torres, 2002).

<sup>109</sup> Williams underscores the basic premise of liberation theology, in that ‘first and foremost, liberation theology is a theology, not the political movement with which many people equate it’ (2000). This is reinforced by Gutiérrez, who states: ‘The Theology of liberation attempts to reflect on the experience and meaning of the faith based on the commitment to abolish injustice and to build a new society; this theology must be verified by the practice of that commitment, by active, effective participation in the struggle which the exploited social classes have undertaken against their oppressors’ (1981: 307). Further, ‘liberation theology offers several analyses of the existing social order in Latin America. It is a strong critique of the various economic and social structures, such as an oppressive government, dependence upon First World countries and the traditional hierarchical Church, that allow some to be extremely rich while others are unable to even have safe drinking water. It is also an examination of the Catholic Church’s activities from the angle of the poor’ (2000). Thus, the concept of social transformation of the oppressed lies within liberation theology, not only by spiritual emancipation, but more importantly, via socioeconomic and political freedom: ‘freeing oneself

is particularly important in relation to Cañar. Firstly, several participants refer either to it, or Proaño, and the impact it/he had on how they viewed the world, indigenous rights and organisation.<sup>110</sup> Secondly, various catholic priests, with a liberation theological background, intervened and supported the Cañari in their fight for land in the late 1960s (Quindi and Solano, n. d.). Daniel explained how he had worked with the left and the liberation church, ultimately referring to himself as being a ‘disciple’ of Proaño and his theological teaching:<sup>111</sup>

I am a lucky disciple of Proaño. He taught me a lot, and orientated me in the reality of Christianity. As Christianity came from Spain, the big problem was how many things were imposed on us. But, working with Proaño, he showed me how true Christianity is about liberating the people, it is the people’s fight. Thus, that is where I found the difference between conservative Christianity and liberating Christianity... my problem is that I am a fighter. I don’t let things go easily. I believe I have rights...<sup>112</sup>

The political mobilisation of indigenous people instigated during land reform by infuriated Cañaris, such as Daniel and Miguel, allowed for later organisational processes within Cañari communities. A provincial level organisation was established in 1968, called the Unión Provincial de Cooperativas de Producción Agrícola y Mercadeo del Cañar, later renamed the Unión Provincial de Cooperativas y Comunas del Cañar (UPCCC) in 1980. The UPCCC still exists today, and its role within the public lives of various Cañari women is documented in Chapter VI. With Daniel as its first president, the Union’s original objective was to ‘fight for the recognition of the peoples and nationalities in the acquisition of land, education, health, cultural identity and indigenous self-management’ (Quindi and Solano, n. d.: 10). It was supported by progressive Catholics and became affiliated with CONAIE in subsequent years (IFAD, 2001). After gaining legal status in 1970, the UPCCC began to lead public gatherings in Cañar. Celebrating the International Day of Work for the first time on 1 May 1971, the UPCCC became an example for other

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from inner and outer encumbrances which inhibit the fulfilment of one’s potential... The struggle of individuals to be free from restraints imposed by other people, by nature or by themselves’ (Norwood Evans, 1992: 138).

<sup>110</sup> See the narratives of Asiri, Nuna and Flor in Chapter VI.

<sup>111</sup> It is not clear how Daniel came to meet Proaño initially.

<sup>112</sup> *Yo soy discípulo de monseñor Proaño de suerte. Entonces él me enseñó mucho. Él me orientó lo que es la realidad de un cristiano... como el cristianismo vino de España, entonces el gran problema lo impusieron muchas cosas. Ya, pero viendo más un poco trabajando con el monseñor Proaño, el verdadero cristianismo es la liberación del pueblo. El verdadero cristianismo es la lucha del pueblo... Entonces abí esta entonces, eso yo le encontré la diferencia del cristianismo conservador y cristianismo liberador... el problema mío es soy bien peleador. Entonces yo no lo dejo fácilmente que hagan las cosas ¿no? Creo que tengo derecho.* Interview: Cañar, 14 July 2011.



provinces, and began interprovincial communication with Chimborazo and Azuay, aiming to unify the fight for land. With a new agrarian reform law proclaimed in 1972, Cañar witnessed a series of indigenous uprisings and protests in 1972 and 1973 by the UPCCC. By 1975, the organisation's combative nature had diminished as the land on most estates had been expropriated; economic development then became the main focus (Quindi and Solano, n. d.).

Against this backdrop, the Ecuadorian Centre for Agricultural Services (CESA) appeared in Cañar, which helped indigenous communities in agricultural modernisation, refocusing the UPCCC's objectives.<sup>113</sup> The UPCCC has been extremely active in Cañar since the 1970s, working with communities and cooperatives establishing centres for bilingual education (see below); building and improving irrigation canals; acquiring a structure to house the organisation's administration and activities, called Ñukanchikwasi; initiating community-based literacy programmes; forming *parroquia* level organisations under the UPCCC umbrella; constructing *casa comunales* in *parroquias*; carrying out agricultural projects; besides participating in the 1990 national indigenous uprising by blocking provincial roads for various days (Quindi and Solano, n. d.).<sup>114</sup>

External organisations such as Oxfam America, SWISSAID, APN and GTZ have helped fund the UPCCC's work, while sometimes undertaking their own projects (IFAD, 2001; Quindi and Solano, n. d.). For example, SWISSAID worked with Cañari women in handicraft development, weaving and dyeing, and breeding small animals. These groups of women, 37 in total, acted as the 'right arm to the provincial movement', carrying out community meetings and training (n. d.: 17). The women held handicraft markets, and participated in International Day of Women

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<sup>113</sup> Bebbington and Thiele (1993: 205-209) provide an overview of CESA's work. It was founded in 1967 by a number of leaders from class-based organisations, amidst agrarian reform, in order to test out reform on land owned by the Church. It initially aimed at promoting peasant organisation to help integrate the rural poor into modernising development models, but with time it changed focus somewhat, 'from simply promoting market integration to strengthening the capacity of campesinos to negotiate relations with both the market and the state. A key part of this work has been to promote campesino organization via consciousness raising and educational activities' (1993: 205).

<sup>114</sup> Ñukanchikwasi was burnt down in June 1994, following tensions over the introduction of new land laws nationally, whereby indigenous groups believed the laws were against small holders, while large landowners considered them to make agriculture 'more effective'. UPCCC members in Cañar led a march and protests, which later led young indigenous people to behave badly towards shopkeepers. A gang of youngsters attacked the organisational headquarters (IFAD, 2001: 66). Muyulema (2001) provides a detailed analysis of this event.

parades (Quindi and Solano, n. d.). I asked Daniel to give me his opinion on the participation of women within agrarian reform:

In the countryside, the wife is glued to her husband and family. So then, for us, women were our “right arm”. I mean, always supporting us in every way. Since the Cañari culture began, women have participated. Always in the movement, fighting... Within the home, we consider women to be another one of our *compañeros*. So therefore in order to support ourselves, we organised them too in the reform. They were organised... We always consult them... It is rare that only a man make decisions at home... the two come to an agreement together.<sup>115</sup> Therefore women have more trust, more guarantee, more security... thus in this way, women have always worked, been leaders, undertaken roles, and we always consulted with them. What could happen, what could occur? So we give suggestions, they give critiques, opinions, over whatever problem... The bigger problem is, is that women were previously not valued. I want to see what happened before, but I don't find anything. Women have done and participated a lot, but nothing is written, there's no information.<sup>116</sup>

From Daniel's perspective, women became organised and supported the men in

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<sup>115</sup> In an anecdote recently sent in an email to me from former Cañar Peace Corps worker, Adams, he said: “My favorite story of empowerment of women is from the time that I took an anthropologist to an outlying village. I warned her along the way not to believe everything she was told, and she assured me, rather smugly, that the people had no reason to lie to her. That evening when we sat in a dark room filled with smoke from the cooking fire, she opened her notebook and began asking questions. The men all sat on the side of the room nearer the door. The women were in the dark, and we couldn't see their faces. As the questioning got going, the men portrayed a society where they were in complete control and women did as they were told. I snickered quietly. The men felt free to say what they wanted as the women didn't understand Spanish, only Quichua. What none of us knew was that a young woman of the village who had become a nun was home visiting and was translating everything the men said. Suddenly the women could take it no longer and got up and yelled at the men for deceiving the visitor, insulting them and making their own incompetent selves look more important than they were. I missed a lot of the Quichua, but these women were speaking very clearly. My snickering changed to roll-on-the floor laughing, and the men were dumbfounded” (Personal Communication: 19 May 2014. Permission to use granted on 27 May 2014).

<sup>116</sup> ... en el área rural, entonces la mujer está más apegado a su marido y la familia, ya. Entonces en ese sentido entonces las mujeres eran más para nosotros eso el brazo derecho. O sea ellas siempre han apoyado en todo sentido, desde la organización de la cultura Cañari siempre han estado participando. Siempre estado en el movimiento y la lucha... Pues más entregadas al hogar, entonces nosotros consideramos que la mujer es un compañera más de nosotros. Entonces por lo tanto para podernos respaldarnos entonces nosotros en cuestión de la reforma organizamos a ellas. Entonces ellas estaban organizadas... Es que nosotros siempre consultamos a ellas. O sea no es que solo nosotros decidimos, ya. Es rarísimo en un lugar solamente el hombre decida... entonces los dos se ponen de acuerdo, me voy o no, o te vas o no. Entonces en ese sentido es que las mujeres tienen un poco más de confianza, un poco más de garantía, un poco más de seguridad... Entonces de esa manera es que las mujeres siempre actúan, trabajan, han sido dirigentas, han ocupado cargos, en siempre nosotros consultamos a ellas. Qué puede pasar, qué puede ocurrir. O sea siempre ellas están entonces y también, entonces damos sugerencias, dan criterios, dan sus opiniones en cualquier problema... El gran problema era antes, o sea la gente no daban valor a la mujer. yo quiero ver qué pasó más antes pero no lo encuentro. Las mujeres han hecho mucho, yo lo acabo de decir, participaron mucho, pero no hay ningún escrito, ninguna información. Interview: Cañar, 14 July 2011.

agrarian reform as a consequence of familial domestic relations.<sup>117</sup> His response also outlines how he considers the role and participation of Cañari women within domestic and public spaces. In Chapter VI, the narratives of Cañari women will provide first hand experiences of public engagement, which also highlight the reality for these women vis-à-vis male attitudes towards their participation. Daniel believed that, as a consequence of agrarian reform and the social changes it brought for Cañari communities, particularly for the younger generations, women had been given more importance:

Now, nearly sixty per cent of women are teachers, leaders, so it has changed entirely. They are professionals of a high calibre. But, why? Because, in my opinion at least, women are a *compañera* in the fight, we should not marginalise them. When I was leader I spoke a lot in this way. Because we need them, and we need them to understand that in order for a leader not to fail, it depends on them. So, through all of our experiences, we have orientated and offered people opportunity to educate themselves... through the many experiences that I have with women in mobilisation, the women have saved many lives. They are more intelligent, more argumentative, and more decisive. Many times we [men] get it wrong, we're fearful. But them, no. So then, we were able to orientate people and in this way, many women are professionals.<sup>118</sup>

Here, Daniel refers to the development of intercultural bilingual education (EIB) in Ecuador, and more specifically, to the creation of bilingual schools as a result of agrarian reform and indigenous mobilisation in Cañar via the UPCCC. Before discussing this further, however, it is worth reflecting on other outcomes of agrarian reform for Cañari women.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> Segundo, a peer of Daniel in Quilloac, had a very familiar perception of Cañari women to Daniel, in which women serve as the 'right arm to men' and have been key in supporting organisational processes in recent years (Interview: Cañar, 3 July 2011). Mama Shulla, in contrast, contradicted Daniel and Segundo, in saying that no women participated in the agrarian reform process (Interview: Cañar, 16 July 2011).

<sup>118</sup> ... unos sesenta por ciento de las mujeres son profesoras, son dirigentes, entonces cambió totalmente. Y entonces son profesionales de alta categoría. Entonces ¿eso por qué? Porque nosotros ya le digo a lo menos mi concepción es eso, las mujeres son una *compañera* más de la lucha, y no tenéis por qué marginar. Entonces cuando fui yo dirigente yo hablaba mucho en este sentido ¿no? Porque necesitamos a ellas y entonces para que ellas comprenden, para que un dirigente no fracase, depende de ellas. Así eso. Y entonces por toda esa experiencia, en todos nosotros, hemos orientado, hemos ofrecido a la gente entonces traten de preparar... yo tengo muchas experiencias que las mujeres han luchado, y entonces las mujeres han salvado muchas vidas. Entonces son más inteligentes, más peleadoras, más luchadoras, más decididas. Entonces muchas veces nosotros equivocamos, tenemos miedo, pero ellas no. Y entonces en ese sentido es que nosotros logramos un poco orientar a la gente. Y entonces de esa manera actualmente muchas mujeres son profesionales. Interview: Cañar, 14 July 2011.

<sup>119</sup> For additional details on Ecuador's agrarian reform, see the chapters by Zevallos, Hanney and Haney, and Forster in Thiesenhusen (1989).

#### ***4.4 Outcomes of Agrarian Reform for Cañari Women***

Given land reform in Ecuador initially came about as a result of the Alliance for Progress, Deere and León (2001) note that, from a gender perspective, the Alliance failed to recognise women as beneficiaries of reforms, nor were women included as direct recipients of the changes in land tenure in respective countries. Rather, the reforms were aimed at aiding peasant families on the large estates and it was ‘assumed that peasant households were represented by a male head and that by benefiting household heads, all household members would benefit as well’ (2001: 63). As Phillips contended:

The Ecuadorian state itself has shown little regard for the problem of gender inequalities in the countryside... none of the country’s agrarian reform programs has been concerned specifically with the integration of rural women (1987: 105).

The inequalities referred to here are connected with the lack of representation of women in agriculture, particularly in statistical data such as censuses, due to the fact that women are often considered as family members rather than being part of the economically active population as individuals. This is despite a significant contribution to agricultural work and division of labour on the part of the wife, for example (Radcliffe, 2002).<sup>120</sup> Even though the agrarian reform of 1964 in Ecuador failed to deliver land to women specifically, women did nonetheless have substantial responsibility for the agricultural production on small *minifundista* farms, while men in turn migrated to the coast or highland cities in search of work to support household incomes. Further, women would often only earn half the agricultural wage of men (Phillips, 1987: 114). Thus, while not represented in official data, women undeniably contributed to the agricultural sector, in addition to their domestic chores.

Since the 1960s, although the land issue has remained central to the indigenous struggle in Ecuador, the matter of gender has not appeared in negotiations with the state over indigenous land rights nor even raised by

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<sup>120</sup> Data from the 2000 agricultural census for Cañar province indicate that within 32,174 agrarian units, approximately 13,000 were operated by women (INEC, 2000). On female participation in agricultural work within the Andean context, see Deere (1977; Deere and León and Jacoby (1991).

indigenous women leaders.<sup>121</sup> As Deere and León note, CONAIE's demands over land have concerned historic land claims and indigenous territories, collective property rights and the inalienability of them, and the right to follow 'traditional customs and practices' (2002: 53). Associating gender with land issues:

... seems irrelevant, for the very preservation of indigenous communities – their identity as indigenous people – is seen to be based on communal access to land. To question how that communal land is then going to be distributed – through what rules will be allocated to families and to the men and women within them, and who will participate in determining those rules – is seen to be divisive and a threat to indigenous unity... The primary demand of indigenous women must be for the defense of the community, which they see as being based on collective access to land, for it is this factor which gives cohesion and meaning to indigenous identity (Deere and León, 2002: 67-68).

This may explain one reason why, during fieldwork, land rights and women's access to land did not appear as a significant topic for discussion with women in Cañar.<sup>122</sup> Women who had experienced the agrarian reforms of the 1960s and 1970s made little reference to how it impacted them directly in terms of individual access to land, but more frequently referred to the increased level of freedom they gained, and how it altered life in other ways. In this regard, Nuna, born in 1949, said:

... after they divided the land, freedom came to us, freedom to study. To have our own school, close by. Our parents and leaders obtained land and continued fighting, until this day. To have education, accessible roads, drinking water – a great necessity. This means that we are more comfortable now, things are a little easier. When I was a child, there didn't used to be a local school, communication networks, drinking water, and electricity. We have done all we can. Looking back

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<sup>121</sup> Deere and León (2001a) note that the neo-liberal agrarian reform law of 1994 in Ecuador also failed to address women's land rights.

<sup>122</sup> In recent personal communication with Judy, she mentioned to me that the local lawyer commented that women's inheritance of land "was a big problem before the 1970's, when Cañari women rarely had official ID documents, including birth certificates or *cedulas*. But the men did. Without these, any legal proceedings such as land transfer would have been difficult or impossible. So the men ended up as property owners, even when they didn't have the right. She said the problem is less now, with everyone having ID papers and women's rights better established, but she still has cases such as this walk into her office" (19 May 2014). The issue of indigenous women's land rights and inheritance in the Andes is a key discussion point between academics (Deere and León, 2001, 2002; Radcliffe, 2002; Razavi, 2003).

now it is a different time.<sup>123</sup>

Mama Willka reflected on her family's insertion into the San Rafael Cooperative:<sup>124</sup>

After I'd married my husband and had my first child, we entered the cooperative. My husband was an associate. So we had land. We have no money, but yes, we have land. They did good, fighting for the land, as they won it. Now everyone has land... Agrarian reform did us a favour. Those who did not enter [the cooperative] now live in misery. So then comes migration. That is tough.<sup>125</sup>

Flor, Willka's younger sister considered the other side of land reform for women, particularly in former *huasipungo* families:

My mother's life got harder after leaving the hacienda. Because there was no one to give you things, such as barley. So my mother began to "do it herself", through exchanging bread. She'd go out and give bread to neighbours in exchange for potatoes, barley, guinea pigs, anything. That's called "do it yourself". That's how she fed us. It was really hard. My father went to work on the coast with my brother, buying clothes and things to sell further north, south, in the tropics. He began to "do it himself", looking for money for us to live. They had land too, with wheat, barley, potatoes.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> ... ya cuando ya se parcelan las tierras, después si ya para nosotros, o sea vino la libertad, libertad de, como le digo yo, libertad de estudiar. Por lo menos tener una escuela propia si quiera. Escuela cercana, escuela completa así... nuestros papas y nuestras nuestra gente, nuestra líderes entonces conseguían la tierra. Después seguían luchando hasta ahora. Tener una educación, tener una educación comunal. Tener vías de acceso. Tener agua potable. Era una necesidad tan grande. Quiere decir, estamos un poco cómodos. Tenemos un poco de facilidad. Porque esos momentos cuando yo era niña, no había ni vías de comunicación, no había escuelas cercanas, no había luz, no había--claro que había agua, había agua, pero no para tomar, pero no había el resto como ahora, facilidad. Hemos hecho posible. Entonces todo eso cuando se ve ahora es otro. Es otro tiempo ahora. Interview: Cañar, 7 July 2011.

<sup>124</sup> Mama Willka's birth year and age at interview are unknown. Given that her younger sisters Flor and Asiri (below) were born in 1954 and 1957 respectively, it is approximated that Mama Willka was born around 1950.

<sup>125</sup> Yo ya después de casado con mi esposo, y ya he tenido hijo, de entremos en esa cooperativa. Entonces tenemos tierra, no tenemos plata, pero sí tenemos tierra. Sí, hizo bien porque lucharon por la tierra, ganaron por la tierra. Sí, hizo un favor la reforma agraria. Los que no dentaron y viven hasta ahora viven miseria. Y ahora después viene el migración. Eso sí es fuerte. Interview: Cañar, 22 June 2011.

<sup>126</sup> Mi madre, yo que me acuerdo después que salir de hacienda era más duro. Porque, porque ya no había quien patrones que den alguna cosa así cebada, que coma así ya no había. Entonces ya mi madre empezó a buscar la vida, haciendo un cambio, yendo con pancito. Entonces así salía mi madre a darle un pancito así a algunos gentes conocidos, por ahí así. Para que de papitas, que de cebadita, que de cuicito, cualquier cosa. Entonces así venía, lo que se llama, buscar la vida se llama eso. Así venía para mantener a nosotros, era muy duro muy duro. Mi padre vuelta iba a trabajar así por su la costa, con mi hermano, comprando algunas ropitas, algunas cositas, vuelta iba a vender las cosas de norte para sur, por caliente, por tropical. Por ahí iba a venderle, vuelta empezaba a buscar la vida, así buscando dinerito para poder vivir para para nosotros. Terrenos tenía aparte de la hacienda, ahí metía tenía trigo, cebada, papas, ya empezaron ya a tener comida para nosotros. Interview: Cañar, 12 July 2011.

In contrast, Flor noted that her life had been more fruitful than her mother's, in addition to raising the issue of land inheritance:

They [parents] were part of the cooperative and had land.<sup>127</sup> This leaves inheritance for our children. We have small parcels of land, including those that my husband had. So my girls grow potatoes, etc. I have guinea pigs, chickens, pigs, sheep etc., I help with everything, and we grow vegetables. That's my life, it isn't like how my mother suffered.<sup>128</sup>

Mama Shulla also inherited land from her parents. Shulla subsequently bought land below her house, with money she saved from weaving and production of ponchos: 'I made the thread from lamb's wool, and sold ponchos in Cañar to buy this land here below us'.<sup>129</sup> In Tania's case, she inherited land from her grandparents: '...they worked so hard, fought so hard. Keeping going they obtained land, and left it to us now. So now I have these fields'.<sup>130</sup>

Nevertheless, the data that did come to light concerning the outcomes of agrarian reform for Cañari women was connected more directly with the long-term impacts. It is worth noting that, while redistribution of land in Cañar in the 1970s was extensive, 'indigenous families generally received low-quality land and rarely obtained the agricultural inputs or credit that agrarian reform laws promised' (Andolina, 2012: 11). Moreover, the size of land received, particularly by former *huasipungueros* in Cañar, was small. This forced family members, particularly men or young boys, to migrate to the coast, or Quito, in search of work to contribute to the family's subsistence economy.

## **Emigration**

Migrants to the coast would stay anywhere from two weeks to a month, even longer

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<sup>127</sup> Lacking the structure of the hacienda, and the security of labour contracts in exchange for land and resources, life was more difficult, even as cooperative associates. If the land that was received was of poor quality, there was a likely need to look elsewhere for ways to survive.

<sup>128</sup> ... eran cooperativa y ya tenían terreno y ya deja herencia para nuestros hijos, ya tenemos pedacitos de terreno, ya tenemos pase que mi marido mismo hay terrenitos. Entonces mis hijas aquí siembran y siembran papitas que oquitas que cualquier cosa ya se siembra. Tanto sueldo, tanto sembrado de de papas, ocas, hacer tanto la agricultura y tanto también yo no estoy pues de porque yo ya cogí plata, estoy soy anclada cada mes yo no bago. Yo tengo que criar cuis, tengo que gallinas, tengo chanchitos, tengo borreguitos, tengo, así. Mientras ayudo de todo, hortalizas sembramos, así. Así es mi vida, no es como antes que mi madre sabía sufrir. Interview: Cañar, 12 July 2011.

<sup>129</sup> Hacía el hilo, así de la lana de oveja. Hacía ponchos, vendiendo en Cañar, compre estos terrenos de acá abajo. Interview: Cañar, 16 July 2011.

<sup>130</sup> ... ellos tanto que trabajaron, lucharon, aguantando sacaron hasta ahora las tierritas, y nos dejaron para nosotros ahora las tierras. Hasta ahora yo tengo esas tierras. Interview: Cañar, 9 July 2011.

in some cases, returning home to Cañar after a period of time (Torres Proaño, 2009). Therefore, agrarian reform in this region meant:

... a process of differentiation inside communities, leaving some with access to land and others outside of it. It was the latter that went to the coast, to work on sugar and banana plantations, or to urban spaces like Guayaquil, working as builders or street sellers. Periods of absence varied, dependent on the work and labour contract (Torres Proaño, 2009: 172).

Women also began to migrate to urban centres to help maintain the household (Hiemstra, 2011: 71). Yet what is more significant is the direction that migrants from Cañar gradually began to head towards from around the 1980s; the USA, exploiting pre-existing migration networks and *coyotes* for human smuggling (Hiemstra, 2011).<sup>131</sup> As Hiemstra highlights, Cañar and Azuay ‘form the epicentre of migration to the United States’ (2011: 68). There is an established body of literature concerning out-migration from Ecuador to the USA and Europe, and more specifically, from the Cañar-Azuay region.<sup>132</sup> It is not the purpose here, therefore, to go into great detail on the topic. However, as will be seen in Chapter V and VI, a number of the participant’s narratives tell of stories connected with migration. It is therefore necessary to provide the context in which to site them. Their stories, predominantly as children left behind in Cañar by their parent(s), demonstrate the harrowing implications that this form of migration has on families. Yori, born to Mama Willka in 1974, is a wife of a migrant to the USA, who summed up the pros and cons of international migration well:

On the one hand, the family can get ahead. If there weren’t this migration, things would be like before. But with migration, everyone can surpass things, have houses, cars. On the other hand, there are bad investments. They build

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<sup>131</sup> The majority of international migrants from Cañar are undocumented in the destination country.

<sup>132</sup> See Hiemstra (2011) for recent discussions. Pribilsky (2001; 2004; 2007; 2012) documents the impact of migration on families in the Cañar-Azuay provinces. See Carling et al. (2012) for a general discussion on issues related to transnational parenthood. See Gratton (2007) for matters related to the labour market and immigrant women from Ecuador in the United States. Gray (2008) discusses possible factors on the decision to out-migrate from southern Ecuador, in addition to the impact that remittances can have on smallholder agriculture in Loja province (2009). Jokisch (2002) considers the impact of international migration from two communities in Cañar on agricultural change, production and land use. In the 1990s, as Ecuador witnessed political and economic insecurity with increasing poverty levels, emigration became common across the country. Europe became a new migrant destination in addition to the USA, especially for women, who began meeting demand for domestic service. The international migration of women has in turned produced a discussion over the notion of ‘transnational motherhood’ (Boccagni, 2012; Escobar, 2010; Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila, 1997; Millman, 2013; Sternberg, 2010).



tremendous houses, where nobody lives. So, economically, it has helped some families. But not all are families of migrants. There is still poverty and needs. What has been affected most is malnutrition. Because the children stay with their grandparents, looked after by their aunts and uncles. If the wife doesn't have the same problem as me, they also leave in order not to separate.<sup>133</sup> They leave and the children stay, wherever god helps them. And then what happens? They send money, the aunt orders it to be sent to her, but then doesn't use it to buy the children a good diet.<sup>134</sup> She buys them some clothing so they look good in the street and they won't tell their father how they're treated. But they're not bought the necessary goods. Instead, the aunt goes shopping for herself. The kids have a little money given to them, but they go and buy fast food, they're full of germs and bugs. Community workshops try to explain that we should feed ourselves well, that we should use the land and not eat like that. But many families don't understand. The kids don't learn well at school, don't do homework, kids are quitting. Then, those children grow up, and as adolescents they begin to drink, now people say they're consuming drugs. Young adolescents are drunk -Alcoholism. Those are the impacts of migration.<sup>135</sup>

In addition to the potential impact on children, for wives who remain in Cañar, the outcomes are multi-layered. On the one hand, as Urpi, born in Quilloac in 1965, said, 'they [men] are not here, so who is more responsible? The mothers are, at

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<sup>133</sup> Yori originally followed her husband to the USA, on a visa acquired for other purposes, but she returned to Ecuador soon after due to her longing to be with her three children, the last of whom has never met their father. Following her return to Cañar, Yori's husband was unfaithful, and pursued a new relationship. Her husband in turn attempted to divorce Yori while still in the USA.

<sup>134</sup> In 2008, migrant remittances sent back to families in Cañar from the exterior were valued at \$219,000 (Ministerio de Coordinación de la Producción Empleo y Competividad, 2011: 17).

<sup>135</sup> *Por un lado como que le superó a la familia, o sea como les digo. O sea si no hubiera esa inmigración y cuantas cosas hubiese sido como de antes o sea, o como en Cuba que no hay muchas cosas, entonces así. Pero que la migración todo el mundo se va a superar un, tienen sus casas, tienen sus autos. Entonces por ese lado como que--Malas inversiones se hacen a veces en esas tremendas casas y nadie vive y todo eso. Entonces, entonces por ese lado en lo económico ha ayudado a algunas familias porque no todas las familias han migrado. Hay un poco más de pobreza y necesidades, pero lo que sí ha impactado más es en la en la desnutrición. Porque, porque los niños se quedan con los abuelos; se quedan con los tíos, tías, encargados por lo que la esposa tiene que para no tener el mismo problema que yo, se van a estar al lado de su esposo, o sea para no separarse. Se van y se quedan los hijos en donde dios ayude. Se quedan y, y hay ¿qué pasa? Lo que manda el dinero a la, a la tía por decir que me manden a mí, y yo estoy encargada de los hijos, y yo no compro lo que se debe comprarse para los niños, una buena alimentación. Algo sí, sí le compro un poco de ropa que se vean mejor en la calle para que no le avisen al papá como están dando. Pero no compré las comidas necesarias entonces, y ese dinero me cojo yo y lo empiezo yo a superar, tengo mi buena ropa tengo lo que sea. Pero los hijos no comen bien, están desnutridos. Comen, le dan un poco de dinero a los niños y se van, que tantas tiendas hay chatarras, mucha comida porquería. Y se comen ellos, están llenos de bichos, de microbios, llenos de de cosas, entonces. Por esa parte también está medio feo, aunque se trata de de recuperar con las charlas en las comunidades que, que se debe alimentarse bien, que sembramos algo en las tierras no estemos comiendo cosas. Pero a muchos niños muchas familias que no entiende. Y esa parte de la desnutrición no no no aprenden bien en las escuelas, no hacen los deberes, están votando los niños, mucho. Y luego esos niños crecen, hacen adolescentes y empiezan ya a tomar no sé, ahora dicen que están consumiendo ya drogas. Pequeños de adolescentes están dando borrachos. Entonces el alcoholismo. Creo que esos efectos tiene la migración.* Interview: Cañar, 22 June 2011.

home with their children'.<sup>136</sup> Women take on sole responsibility for the home, children and income generation activities. On the other hand, some women 'have taken advantage [of the situation], gone to school, gone to college, advanced themselves by getting educated'.<sup>137</sup> Equally, the absence of migrated men has provided women with opportunity to engage in more community activities. Yet, contradictory to this, Silvia from San Rafael and born in 1975, also said:

... there are women who have a lot of leadership qualities and are very participatory, but maybe if the husband has migrated, he doesn't let her. They say, "no. If you're going to be a leader, I will not send you money", maybe due to jealousy, for being far away. So, in order to not cause social problems, women have to limit themselves.<sup>138</sup>

A key matter arising in the data concerning migration is the impact it is having on cultural values, particularly within the younger generation of Cañaris. One way that the communities are trying to overcome this is through intercultural bilingual education (EIB), which has also been another long-term outcome of agrarian reform. Its benefits are particularly notable within the female population.

### ***EIB and Instituto Quilloac***

By the time agrarian reform was underway in the late 1960s, indigenous education had begun to flourish throughout Ecuador. From the early 1960s, a number of processes enabled literacy amongst indigenous people in Ecuador, undertaken by outside institutions, organisations and State universities, all of which influenced the expansion of EIB (Conejo, 2008; Flores Carlos, 2005b; Moya, 1987; Torres, 2005; Valiente Catter and Küper, 1998; Vélez, 2008; Weaver, 2008). These developments culminated in the 1980s when a number of Institutos Normales Bilingües were created (1980) to train indigenous teachers (Valiente Catter and Küper, 1998), and a new Law of Education recognised EIB as an official objective in 1983 (Flores

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<sup>136</sup> ... *no están en la casa, quien más es responsable? Es las madres de familia que están en la casa junto a sus hijos.* Interview: Cañar, 29 November 2010.

<sup>137</sup> *Entonces ahí aprovecharon en ellas. Entonces ellas entonces se dice que migración de las mujeres en sí ellas quedan aquí entonces van a la escuela, van al colegio, entonces avanzaron a formarse.* Interview: Daniel, Cañar, 14 July 2011.

<sup>138</sup> ... *hay mujeres que tienen mucho liderazgo, son muy participativas, pero tal vez por lo que el esposo es migrante, no le permite. Si el esposo está en Estados Unidos o está en España dicen "no. Y te vas de dirigente, no te envío las recursos de acá", celos, o sea están lejos, entonces para no causar problemas sociales entonces qué tienen que hacer, limitarse.* Interview: Cañar, 29 June 2011.

Carlos, 2005).<sup>139</sup> In 1988 the Dirección Nacional de Educación Intercultural Bilingüe (DINEIB) was established, heavily influenced by the national indigenous movement, CONAIE.<sup>140</sup> CONAIE argued that EIB should not only be present in discussions related to education specifically, but that it should also become part of the political debate (Velez V., 2008).<sup>141</sup>

In 1991 several Institutos Pedagógicos Interculturales Bilingües were formed, including one established in Quilloac, Cañar, following a period of insistence from within the Cañari community. Before explaining this latter point further, it is worth reflecting on why there was a specific goal to establish access to education for indigenous people following agrarian reform:

... They [the indigenous leaders] began to fight for education because, through forming cooperatives here, they say that at the moment land began to be given and the divisions increased, they couldn't count how many metres, how many hectares, how to calculate where they could cultivate up to. So they saw the necessity in which, 'now we have land, we don't know how to count or write'. They carried out assemblies, but they needed to make records, request certificates. Some of the management required letters, but none was able to do this. So they realised that, 'with land we cannot receive anything. But the land is what gives to us. Now we want education'. So they began to fight for an education, and here specifically, with the creation of Instituto Quilloac.<sup>142</sup>

O'Connor (2007: 199) highlights how hacienda workers in the early 1960s were not only demanding improved working conditions and land redistribution in Ecuador,

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<sup>139</sup> The respective Article indicated that educational systems developed in areas predominantly inhabited by indigenous people would use Kichwa as the main language in education and in culturally related spheres, and that Spanish would be used in intercultural relationships (Flores Carlos, 2005).

<sup>140</sup> The member organisations of CONAIE prepared an educational proposal that was put forward to the government, which resulted in the creation of the DINEIB (Conejo, 2008).

<sup>141</sup> The DINEIB was institutionalised on 15 November 1988 via executive decree and reform to the Law of Education. The principal functions and roles of the DINEIB included the development of appropriate curriculums for all levels of EIB; design modules according to the needs of respective indigenous populations; to oversee the application of a language policy that incorporated phonological criteria for each language; and plan and implement EIB in coordination with indigenous organisations (Conejo, 2008: 69).

<sup>142</sup> ... comienzan ya a luchar por la educación, porque igual, luego de que, a través de formaron cooperativas también acá, al fin de acceder a, a la reforma agraria. Dicen que comenzaron a dar ya los terrenos en los cerros, en los pajonales. Y al momento que asciendan las divisiones ya no podían ni contar cuántos metros, cuántas hectáreas, cómo se calcula, hasta donde es o si cultivaban. Entonces vieron la necesidad de que ahora nos tenemos tierras pero no sabemos cómo calcular, escribir. Realizaban asambleas, pero necesitaban hacer actas, pedían actas. Alguna gestión necesitaban oficios, y nadie era capaz o no estaba en condiciones de hacer eso, entonces ahí se dieron cuenta que no, con tierra no sacamos nada. Pero es la tierra la que nos da. Ahora queremos educación, entonces ahí comienzan a luchar por la educación y, acá específicamente en el colegio con la creación del instituto Quilloac... Interview: Tamaya, Cañar, 10 July 2011.

but also education. Bearing in mind the strength of Miguel's presence and leadership in Quilloac detailed above, Adams explains that Miguel wanted:

... the children of the members of the Quilloac cooperative, especially his own children, to get high school educations and even for a few to go on to college to learn practical skills such as agronomy and animal medicine. He and other leaders tell me that one young person has been chosen to be trained as a leader, another as an agronomist, another as a civil engineer. They program progress (1969: 8).

Twenty years later, it was Miguel's brother, Segundo, and Daniel who were key protagonists in establishing Instituto Quilloac in Cañar:

Around 1980, it seemed they were creating seven bilingual institutes nationally. Knowing this, we could not leave it, and travelled to Quito, to Cuenca. Thank God Roldos came and said, 'OK, an institute has to be in Cañar'. Other educational institutions in the centre of Cañar wanted to become those institutes, as they had the infrastructural capacity. But Roldos policy at that time was good. He said, 'no, these institutes have to be in the countryside'. That was the advantage. A Ministry commissioner came to do an evaluation and socio-economic study, visiting various areas of the canton. Then, many communities had nothing, no electricity or water. But we, due to the collaboration of the Misión Andina, we did here in Quilloac. That helped us with that commission, in which they said 'that facilitates and favours the creation of an institute in Quilloac community'.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> Mas o menos por el año 80, parece crean 7 institutos al nivel del país, institutos bilingües. Entonces nosotros, sabiendo de esto, nosotros no podíamos dejar y íbamos haciendo viajes a Quito, viajes a Cuenca, y gracias a Dios el vino de Roldos, dijo 'bueno, un instituto tiene que ser en Cañar'. Esto supieron vueltas de centros de aquí de Cañar. Vuelta quisieron llevar a, quisieron llevar para que sea escrito esos institutos. Proposición que ya hicieron ellos, dicen 'bueno nosotros queremos, nosotros tenemos amplitud'. Por ejemplo José Peralta ya tenemos amplitud y casas y aulas. Podemos nosotros que venga acá. Pero la política de Roldos era bueno en ese tiempo. Dijo 'no, estos institutos tienen que ser en el campo'. Eso era la ventaja. Vino una comisión del Ministerio, vino hacer evaluación y estudio socio-económico, fue a visitar por la zona de Cañar a Quilloac, fue por Sigsig, por Incapirca, por otras zonas. En ese tiempo muchas comunidades todavía no teníamos nada, ni luz ni agua. Pero nosotros por la colaboración de la Misión Andina nosotros ya tuvimos en la comunidad de Quilloac. Y también teníamos luz eléctrica. Esto nos facilito para que esta comisión que vino de Quito para hacer estudios de creación del instituto favorezca diga 'se facilita la creación en la comunidad de Quilloac'. Interview: Segundo, Cañar, 3 July 2011.



**Photo 3: Instituto Quilloac, Cañar.**

Photograph by H. James, 14 July 2011.

One of the principal roles of these institutes when founded was to provide a place for people to be teacher trained in order to work in intercultural bilingual schools that use the Intercultural Bilingual Education System Model (MOSEIB) for teaching and learning (Fuentes Orellana, 2011: 13). The MOSEIB forms a model that is:

... educationally practical, part of the needs, interests and aspiration of the diverse nationalities and indigenous communities. It is based in the inalienable right to be recognised as groups with their own characteristics that conform to their respective cosmovisions. It considers the specific ways of life, promotes the valuation and critical recuperation of culture of its ancestors, it contributes to the social strengthening of the respective ethnicities and of the country in general, through the processes of socialisation, decentralisation and autonomy; it anticipates the active participation of parents, community leaders, teachers, national and international organisations in educative activities (Quishpe Lema, 2001).

It is therefore possible to see how EIB can be used as a mechanism for overcoming some of the negative impacts created by international migration in Cañar.

In 1992, Congress decentralised the DINEIB and the model for EIB was made official in 1993 (Vélez, 2008). In more recent years, university institutions across Ecuador have created academic programmes aimed at indigenous students

and professionals (Cuji, 2012; Mendoza, 2008; Weaver, 2008; Zhingri, 2007).<sup>144</sup> As Guamán (2002: 135) suggests, the motivation of secondary school graduates to pursue university studies has been influenced by the presence of EIB, the indigenous organisations, and educational actors in communities working with parents, families and leaders.

It is undeniable that the presence of EIB has had noteworthy results with regards to formal schooling and literacy in Ecuador, when comparing illiteracy rates in 1950 with those from the 2010 census (Camacho Cercado, 2012; Maldonado Ruiz, 2012; Sánchez-Parga, 2010). Moreover, with an increased access to higher education in more recent years, there has been an upsurge in indigenous professionalisation. As indigenous movements have 'long demanded culturally appropriate higher education and training that reflects indigenous realities and practical needs' (Andolina et al., 2009: 169), this represents a major achievement. It is fair to say that the development of intercultural education has provided new opportunities to indigenous people which were previously unavailable.<sup>145</sup>

The establishment of EIB in Cañar has been far reaching, as exemplified by Urpi and Tamaya. Urpi suggested that EIB has led Cañari people to break patterns of discrimination towards them from the non-indigenous culture:

Today, we have access to study in whichever college now. Previously, colleges in the centre of town would not permit indigenous people, so people primarily came here to the Institute because it is in an indigenous community.... But, why? Because, here in Cañar at least, it is highly racist. Previously, when our elders went to the centre with barley rice, a pig, bull or

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<sup>144</sup> As Weaver (2008) notes, it was during the 1970s that the first generation of indigenous students enrolled in universities, particularly at the Universidad Central de Ecuador and the PUCE, where they were trained to work as bilingual educators. Yet Weaver also highlights that 'this first generation found their university opportunities relatively limited to social sciences and education departments' (2008: 50). In 2004, the Intercultural University of the Nationalities and Indigenous Communities opened in Quito, offering undergraduate courses in ancestral architecture, agro-ecology, science of education with intercultural pedagogy, community tourism, and postgraduate courses in intercultural research, and human rights and indigenous peoples (Sarango, 2009).

<sup>145</sup> Resisting the dominant culture's educational system, the indigenous movement has attempted to break away and has been successful in overcoming the State's 'interventionist and ideological domination' (Ibarra, 1992: 146). As such, CONAIE has caused the government to consider the discrimination suffered vis-à-vis indigenous culture and education, making the State recognise indigenous rights over land, organisation, culture and language. Indigenous people demanded that the movement drive EIB and that materials be developed by the former, using them as 'instruments to advance the fight and organisation, besides the development of the culture' (Ibarra, 1992: 147). Consequently, in the late 1990s, amid the recognition of cultural rights, reforms were made to the Ecuadorian constitution with regards to justice, medicine and education (Cervone, 2012).

milk to sell, they [townspeople] paid but put on their price, saying, 'that is good, take it or leave it'. If the elders protested, they would be abused and left. They'd think that we are not the same human beings, the same as them. So, with thanks to education, we are breaking all these patterns... These days, these years, an indigenous person can be an indigenous authority, an indigenous leader, have responsibilities. Indigenous people are becoming better trained and prepared.<sup>146</sup>

Tamaya, born in Quilloac in 1970, extended this point by highlighting some of the outcomes of EIB, especially for the indigenous community and their public profile in Cañar:

Over twenty years of bilingual education has contributed to the training of many people... especially nationally; over 280 graduates with bachelor degrees, over 600 teachers, over 40 indigenous men and women with higher-level degrees... There are now many primary teachers, doctors, engineers, lawyers, provincial authorities etc. A specific example from Cañar is the Mayor, fruit of bilingual education - student of bilingual education and bilingual educational professional. After working in another institute, he is now Mayor, which is contributed to by bilingual education. Equally, leaders of the indigenous movement within Cañar, the UPCCC and Tucayta, and locally within the community, these are also fruits of bilingual education. The majority of them have been educational directors or were primary school teachers. The DINEIB has supported them through the organisation, and they strengthen the local organisation.<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> *En asunto de la educación hay acceso a nosotros de estudio en cualquier colegio, ahora últimamente estos años, ya. No dieron acceso a las comunidades indígenas en los colegios centrales de la ciudad, prácticamente ya dio acceso colegio de acá, del instituto porque está en la comunidad indígena... Entonces, por qué? Porque al menos hablando de nuestro Cañar es un Cañar sumamente racista, que anteriormente los del centro cuando iban nuestros taytas con arroz de cebada, con un chanchito, con un toro o con litro de leche vender, ellos pagaban, ellos ponían su precio, decían, 'bueno es esto y ustedes cogen', pero si reclamaba allí, castigaban bien y se iban. Piensa que nosotros no somos los mismos seres humanos, quizás igual que ellos entonces. Entonces más bien todos esos paradigmas hemos roto gracias a la educación... Pero ahora estos días, estos años, el indígena es una autoridad indígena, es un líder indígena, están en todos los cargos, indígenas están siguiendo, preparando más. Interview: Urpi, Cañar, 22 June 2011.*

<sup>147</sup> *... a través de los 20 años ha contribuido como digo a la formación de la gente... A través de la educación bilingüe se ha capacitado al país mucha gente; más de 280 licenciados, más de 600 docentes, más de más de, sí, 40 compañeros y compañeras de grado superior ... ahora, pasados los 20 años, hay muchos profesores, no solamente profesores primarios, hay licenciados. Hay doctores, hay ingenieros, hay abogados, y otra gente de que ha sido profesores, han sido directores provinciales y han accedido a otros espacios. Un ejemplo claro alcalde de Cañaris, fruto de la educación bilingüe, estudiante de la educación bilingüe, trabajó en la educación bilingüe como vicerrector. Se fue a otra institución luego y luego es alcalde, es contribución de la educación bilingüe. Igual, los líderes del movimiento indígena a nivel del Cañar, al nivel de la UPCC, al nivel de la Tocaita, al nivel de esta comunidad, también son fruto de esta educación bilingüe. La mayoría de los que han sido dirigentes de educación fueron profesores primarios. Mucha gente. Los líderes en las comunidades, la dirección ha apoyado para que a través de la organización, fortalezcan a la a la organización comunitaria. Interview: Tamaya, Cañar, 10 July 2011.*

More specifically, the creation of Instituto Quilloac was considered especially important in allowing ‘women to directly begin to enter education’.<sup>148</sup> One participant suggested that EIB has led many more women than before to prepare themselves for college and university, allowing them to ‘open up doors’ and ‘realise that they cannot be manipulated or marginalised as easily’.<sup>149</sup> Tamaya argued that she thought EIB had ‘given women the light to begin to reflect on their situations’, besides an opportunity to create an income for their family.<sup>150</sup> In like vein, Urpi believed that bilingual education has led women to begin ‘breaking machismo’. She commented that, ‘although it is very difficult, and although the men say we are feminists, maybe it is more the fact that we also want to be human beings. We are people with the same ability to be in any institution’.<sup>151</sup> EIB has not only enabled better opportunities for the Cañari community as a whole, but has also provided indigenous women with an external resource and avenue to pursue a formal education, which was not available previously. Just as EIB is argued to have empowered the indigenous movement as a collective, it can also help aid empowerment on an individual level too.

The overall significance of increased entry to education via EIB and subsequent pathways to professionalism for women in Cañar, from a generalised perspective, is visible in the words of multiple participants. Several of the male participants reflected on women’s professionalism from the perspective of the family and organisation. Daniel commented that he thought women’s professionalism was an advantage because ‘I have seen children of female teachers, for example, advancing more and more in their education. Some are more devoted to studying,

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<sup>148</sup> ... *ya con la creación del instituto es la que las mujeres comienzan a acceder directamente a la educación.* Interview: Tamaya, Cañar, 10 July 2011.

<sup>149</sup> ... *gracias a la educación intercultural bilingüe muchas mujeres estamos preparado en los colegios, en las universidades... yo creo que ahora como ya hay la dirección bilingüe, la educación bilingüe nos han permitido seguir abriendo las puertas a los indígenas y eso. Pero antes sí como--ya se van preparándose, ya se van dándose cuenta la gente entonces ya no se deja manipular o marginar tan fácilmente.* Interview: Nuria, Cañar, 20 June 2011.

<sup>150</sup> ... *educación ha dado luces para las mujeres comiencen a reflexionar en situaciones... un fuente de ingreso, para su familia.* Tamaya, Cañar, 10 July 2011.

<sup>151</sup> ... *estamos acá rompiendo el machismo, aunque es bien difícil, aunque digan los hombres que somos feministas, tal vez que, no es eso, sino mas bien nosotros queremos que somos también seres humanos. Somos personas de igual condiciones para estar en cualquier institución...* Interview: Urpi, Cañar, 22 June 2011.



more determined. And isn't that how it should be?'<sup>152</sup> Likewise, Pancho, born in Quilloac in 1962, hoped the increase in female professionals would allow the community to be better organised, and that these women would help their children and orientate them.<sup>153</sup> Segundo suggested that increased female professionalism was 'quite positive'. He considered it to help women 'see things more clearly':

A woman who is professional has another mind. Committed to the cause, to the movement, no? At times, we men are firm within whatever context, we mark out the boundaries. I think women are even firmer because they have been more connected in reality.<sup>154</sup>

For Yori and Silvia, their focus was on the change in access to public roles for women as a consequence of education, in which many are now 'at the front of public and private institutions, with a presence in most sectors'.<sup>155</sup> Yori highlighted that some professional indigenous women in Cañar are engaged in politics, and that others have changed from simply being at home to:

... looking for work and bettering themselves... They advance themselves and are not at home so much... although there are some that continue at home [herself included], caring for the children and animals and dedicated to agriculture. You can view life in any way.<sup>156</sup>

### ***Generational Change and Education***

The appearance of female indigenous professionals in recent years in Cañar seems ever more significant when considering the issue of gender preference and schooling during the hacienda period and the discrimination that women faced from both their family and spouses (discussed in section 4.2). Bethal notes how the experiences of familial relations can impact on their attitude towards younger generations accessing formal education:

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<sup>152</sup> *yo he visto los hijos de las profesoras cada vez van avanzando más en el campo de la educación. Entonces unos son más entregados al estudio, más decididos. Y entonces así tiene que ser pues, no?... Interview: Daniel, Cañar, 14 July 2011.*

<sup>153</sup> *... muchas mujeres son profesionales. Entonces espero que todo sea porque eso nos permite organizar, ayudar a sus hijos, orientar a sus hijos. Interview: Pancho, Cañar, 5 July 2011.*

<sup>154</sup> *... es bastante positivo. Porque ellas ven mas con claridad el impacto. Porque una mujer que ya es un profesional es otro mente. Entregado la causa, entregado al movimiento, no? Por eso yo les dije al rato a lo mejor los varones a veces somos firmes con cualquier pretexto, nos deslindamos. Yo pienso que la mujer está más firme porque ella ha estado más palpante digamos, en la realidad. Interview: Segundo, Cañar, 3 July 2011.*

<sup>155</sup> *... al frente de instituciones públicas, privadas. Ya se ve la presencia de las indígenas en casi todos los sectores. Interview: Silvia, Tucayta, 29 June 2011.*

<sup>156</sup> *Algunos están en la política ... Ahora ya se buscan sus puestos a través de los estudios y están más superadas... Van, van avanzando más, ya no están mucho en la casa. Pero hay que todavía siguen en la casa, seguimos en la casa; dedicando a la agricultura, la crianza de los animales, la crianza de los hijos, en hacer la, las casas. Ven la vida de cualquier forma. Interview: Yori, Cañar, 22 June 2011.*

Negative attitudes...have contributed to the continuation of negativity that surrounds the perceptions of education held by many Indigenous peoples. There are many Indigenous parents who, in some instances, have such appalling memories of school and the discrimination overtly displayed towards them, that they don't enforce the school attendance of their children (2007: 53).

When discussing the topic of education with participants whose mothers and grandmothers had worked on the hacienda, they described their respective attitudes towards women's education. It is evident that in some cases elder women internalised the discrimination targeted against them, believing it to be the "natural order" of things, and that they did not have the right or place to change restrictions set upon them. This was demonstrated, for example, in Urpi's quote here:

... the women in the communities, they always said that we are only to be housewives, to care and bring up the children, to cook, to work spinning, help in agriculture. They were always the objects of burden and work. My mother, she practically brought us up thinking that men are sacred, like a god. If they were to hit us, we cannot defend ourselves, but simply be humble, put up with it. That's what women thought. She also said, 'the day that you marry, there is no divorce, separations, nothing. You are only separated by death. You will also only be made to be a housewife', etc., like I said they said, before. 'Nothing more. If you go to college, they will hurt you'. That's what my mother thought. Having to get up early, looking after the husband and tend to him, all that is what she said.<sup>157</sup>

Not only was it men who limited women's access to education, it was individual women on occasion too. This was demonstrated via participant's discussions of the attitude of elder women towards the educational achievements of the younger generations today. In Maritza's case, when she initially wanted to go to college, she commented:

... my grandmother said no, that she didn't agree with me. Because women, the first thing that they will do when they go to college, is meet men, get married, and become a servant. In contrast, men, yes, they can continue

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<sup>157</sup> ... las mujeres en las comunidades, ellas siempre decían de que solamente nosotros somos amas de casa, para cuidar, criar a los hijos, para cocinar, y para trabajo para hilar, para ayudar en la agricultura, eran simplemente objetos de carga y de trabajo. Mi mama, prácticamente ella nos crío de que los esposos, los maridos, son sagrados como un dios. Si es que si ellos nos castigan, no podemos nosotras también defender, sino simplemente humillar, aguantar, eso era la idea de la mujer. Ella decía también de que 'el día que se casa Ud.', decía, 'ya no hay divorcio, no hay separaciones, nada, sino es Uds. separados con la muerte. También, Uds. tienen que hacer simplemente para amarse casa, como dicen anteriormente para defender al esposo, para cuidar a los hijos, para que hacedes domesticas. Nada mas, simplemente el colegio, no. Se van al colegio, se van a dañar'. Eso pensaba mi mama. Tener búscale levantar pronto, cuidar al marido, atender en el marido, todo así en hablando, por mi mama. Interview: Urpi, Cañar, 22 June 2011.

studying despite getting married, having children. Being men, they can decide for themselves, yes. But in contrast, women cannot decide.<sup>158</sup>

Another important point that arose within participant dialogues was the matter of familial support for the educational obtainment of younger generations. Although members of older generations may have encountered negative experiences of school themselves, the data from Cañar demonstrates that those parents who were children on the hacienda, in particular, have encouraged their children to study. For example, Segundo, commented:

In the case of my children, I have learnt from experience in adulthood. I studied when I was 32 years old, while bringing up three children. I've also been an advisor and Director [of Institute] too. So, when you want something, it can happen. We can move forward. In that sense, I have said to my children, 'OK, here is the opportunity. We understand. We will do all we can, we will make sacrifices'. My wife and I have said, 'well, we have not been able to continue. My parents couldn't, but now is the time for you to. Thanks to my children, they have understood me, so now nearly all my children are students.'<sup>159</sup>

Another father made reference to the importance of education in his children's lives:

Today, we have taken education very seriously. We also want our children to be more than just teachers and to have a little more advancement and not be in a situation of revenge or rebellion. But to have a life that they want. Life is always that bit more difficult, more competitive... in competition one needs better titles, better educational instruction, and better scientific knowledge in order to deal with life.<sup>160</sup>

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<sup>158</sup> ... en las décadas anteriores las mujeres únicamente éramos amas de casa y no más. Inclusive yo, cuando por primera vez quería ingresar al colegio, mi abuela decía que no, que no estuvo de acuerdo conmigo. Porque las mujeres, lo primero que van a ir al colegio, van a ir a conocer hombres y van a casarse y de aquí a servido. Pero en cambio los hombres sí, pueden seguir a pesar de que se casen, contraigan matrimonio, tengan hijos, ellos como son hombres pueden decidirse por sí, y en cambio las mujeres no deciden. Interview: Maritza, Cañar, 21 Feb 2011.

<sup>159</sup> En mi caso mis hijos, yo he dedicado con la experiencia que en edad adulta. Viera que yo estudie de los 32 años, pasado, llevado 3 hijos entre estudiar, de consejo, y luego estudie, estudie. Y he sido dirigente también. Consejo y estudiado. Entonces cuando uno quiere, sí se hace. Sí podemos conseguir. Por ese lado, en mis hijos he dicho 'bueno. Ahora es la oportunidad. Nosotros entendemos. Vamos a hacer lo posible, vamos a sacrificar'. Yo he estado con mi señora hablando 'no pues, nosotros no hemos podido seguir. Mis papacitos no han podido, pero ahora es Uds'. Gracias a los hijos me han entendido, entonces casi todos mis hijitos son estudiantes digamos. Interview: Segundo, Cañar, 3 July 2011.

<sup>160</sup> En actualidad, o sea, hemos tomado muy en serio la educación, hemos tomado muy en serio responsablemente la educación, y también a nuestros hijos queremos que sean ya no solamente profesores, sino mas bien tengan un poco mas de avance. Y para no sea en situación de revancha, de rebeldía, sino mas bien la vida misma lo exigen, la vida exige, la vida cada vez mas va siéndose mas duro, mas competitivo... en la competencia uno tiene que tener mejores títulos, mejor instrucción educativo, mejor conocimiento científico para poder enfrentar a la vida. Interview: Alejandro, Cañar, 21 July 2011.

Likewise, Ima from the community of Correucu reflected on her support for her daughter's education:

... I am always available to her. If something is wrong, I always go to the college to speak with the teachers... I don't want her to suffer as one could. So I want to support her in studying, so that she can achieve all her dreams. I want her to know that she can finish university, be a professional, have a job, and not suffer. That's my dream for my daughter.<sup>161</sup>

These quotes challenge Bethal's claim above, particularly as these interviewees had encountered challenges to their own educational achievement as children. Equally, it seemed that grandparents also began to change their opinions once they observed young people studying, and the value that schooling seemed to have:

My grandfather, when he saw us studying, would say, 'you, no. For what?' Of course, still today, my grandparents would say, 'the men? They need to learn how to sign their name, and women don't'. They never believed women could be lawyers, doctors, etc. They'd say, 'that is not for women nor indigenous people, we will never be that'. In their minds we were only good to serve as labourers and that we would never be able to study... And so when we began studying and I graduated with my *Bachillerato*, they said, 'yes, that is very good'. They saw other girls in the community, like my female cousins, their granddaughters, going to school. So then they said, 'you have to study, you have to study. But you are not to become like the *mestizos*, to become doctors etc.'. Because they still didn't think it possible... When I finished college, when I finished my training to be a primary school teacher and began working as one, grandfather said, 'look at you working, you're like the *mestizos*'. He was old by that point and about to pass on. But he saw how we had obtained degrees and had jobs. He said, 'you have to teach the other kids'...<sup>162</sup>

It is possible to argue, therefore, that EIB has had an empowering impact on the collective within the indigenous population. It has raised consciousness and has

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<sup>161</sup> ... yo siempre estoy pendiente de ella. Algo está mal yo siempre voy a hablar en el colegio con los profesores... no quiero así que sufra así como uno se sufre así. Entonces por eso yo quiero que a ella en eso le apoyo que estudie, y que alcance todos los sueños que tiene. Que sepa acabar la universidad y yo qué sé, que se vaya a preparar por ahí, y que sea una buena profesional y que tenga su propio trabajo y así que no ponga a sufrir como se sufre. Entonces, eso es el sueño de mí, para mi hija. Interview: Ima, Cañar, 7 June 2011.

<sup>162</sup> Mi abuelito, él cuando veía a nosotros estudiando decía 'ustedes no, para qué?' Todavía, claro mi abuelita y mi abuelito decían: '¿Los hombres? Que aprendan a poner su firma y las mujeres no. Nunca hemos de ser abogado, doctor, eso no', dice, 'no es para mujeres ni es para indígenas, eso nunca no vamos a ser, en su cabeza tenían de que los indígenas solo servimos para trabajar. No, no vamos a poder estudiar... Y cuando comenzamos a estudiar yo ya me gradué de bachiller, 'eso sí que es bueno', así decía. Pues viendo que ya otras chicas de mi comunidad, mis primas, sus nietas, comenzaron a ir a la escuela. Entonces decía: tienen que estudiar entonces, tienen que estudiar. Pero no han de ser como los mestizos, decía, no, no, ha de ser doctor. Así pero, todavía como que no creía... Cuando terminé el colegio, cuando terminé para ser profesora primaria, ingresé a ser profesora y comencé a trabajar, ahí decía 'estás trabajando, eres como los mestizos', entonces era viejito ya, y a punto de morir. Pero vio que nosotros ya teníamos título, teníamos trabajo. Él decía 'tienen que estudiar a los otros niños'... Interview: Tamaya, Cañar, 10 July 2011.

helped promote organisation at both local and national levels. Equally, it appears that EIB has enabled indigenous communities and families to value formal education more than before, and helped generate socioeconomic change at both a familial and community level. It has enabled people to recognise formal education as a valuable tool for socio-economic and political advancement. Additionally, the fight of the indigenous movement for the State to recognise indigenous rights, culture and language has also influenced how non-indigenous people in Ecuador interact with those of indigenous ethnicity vis-à-vis education and professionalisation. This is demonstrated particularly through increased university access for indigenous peoples. These latter points are expanded upon further in the next chapter in relation to indigenous women and obtaining university degrees.

### ***Conclusion***

This chapter has shown how it is possible for a group of disenfranchised people to become “empowered” especially from a collective perspective. The arrival of the Spanish and their feudal systems and labour structures had overwhelming impacts on native Cañari communities. It was not until external agents appeared in Cañar around the time of agrarian reform in the 1960s that the Cañari were given an opportunity to fight against their oppression and the hacienda. As this chapter has demonstrated via my data collection combined with prior scholarly evidence, the actions of men were visibly important in that fight. Women’s roles during this period have not been as widely documented within academic circles, yet the data provided in this chapter suggests that women were vital in supporting their husbands and male *compañeros* in their struggle by acting as their “right arm”. As such, many of the theoretical discussions around empowerment in Chapter II can also be applied to the processes that Cañari men went through as subjugated individuals towards the end of hacienda period.

Given the belief that an educational process must occur prior to the manifestation of empowerment (Stacki and Monkman, 2003), and reflecting on Deere and León’s notion of external agents acting as facilitators in that process (2001: 25), the MAE acted as some of the first facilitators of empowerment for various Cañari men. They provided an environment for empowerment to be developed by training them in leadership, cooperativism and agrarian reform. The

influence of the MAE on Miguel from Quilloac, in particular, produced *power within* Miguel, which in turn provided him with *power to* enable administrative organisation within the *comuna* for the first time from a grass-roots perspective. Further, the MAE helped with infrastructural community projects in Quilloac, such as building a school was significant, especially given the limited access to education for indigenous people on the hacienda. Likewise, the MAE's work with Cañari women in developing small-income generation projects provided an opportunity for women to organise, potentially allowing *power with* to develop as a consequence of new skills that could lead to increased independence and collective autonomy later (Stromquist, 2002). Whilst further research is required to broaden knowledge concerning the MAE's role in women's development in Cañar during the 1960s, it is evident from the current data that the MAE presented women with opportunities that were previously unavailable to them, especially in relation to vocational training and non-formal education. This had the potential for empowerment processes to occur. Taking all this into consideration, therefore, it can be argued that the MAE acted as a catalyst for empowerment amongst the Cañari, which later turned into collective organizing and indigenous mobilisation during agrarian reform and thereafter. Through non-formal education methods, the MAE caused the Cañari to take action to address the imbalance of power and their poor quality of life on the hacienda (Brennan, 1997; Coombs and Ahmed, 1974; La Belle, 1986).

In like vein, the Peace Corps provided an environment for processes of empowerment to be developed by the Cañari in the 1960s, especially through its aid in helping communities address the problems they faced over the acquisition of land. In this sense, the Peace Corps workers present in Cañar at this time did not initiate what has been called 'conflictual power' (Bachrach and Baratz, 1962; Dahl, 1957a; Lukes, 2005) over the indigenous communities. They acted as facilitators in helping to identify the problem for analysis, thereby ensuring a resolution via a 'bottom-up' approach (Bosch, 1998; La Belle, 1986).

Further, Miguel's experience in Tennessee as a consequence of the Peace Corps led him to find *power to* challenge the cost of land upon his return. Miguel was also in a position to create a network of "bonding" social capital in Quilloac (Adler and Kwon, 2002). Coming from the free-holder *comuna* on Guantug, his engagement with external agents and development of leadership qualities enabled him to build a

social structure in Cañar through which others could access his enthusiastic organising abilities. For example, Miguel acted as a role model for Daniel, who, although younger than Miguel, became an important activist in Cañar during the agrarian reform period. Further, the legacy of Miguel's fight transcended his siblings, with his youngest brother, Segundo, becoming an important player in the community's development later on. In this sense, Miguel's *power within* became an accessible resource for others; he acted as a "pre-condition" for future processes of empowerment in Cañar (Kabeer, 1999b).

While women's voices are minimal amongst the discussions concerning the agrarian reform process in Cañar, it is through some of the outcomes of the reforms that women's opportunities have increased and they have found a more prominent position in Cañari society. The shift in generational attitudes towards women and their access to education is significant, demonstrating an overall level of consciousness-raising not only amongst men but women too. Participant experiences of women's changing roles due to EIB demonstrate this further. The value of education has been observed and now children and young people are being encouraged to become educated. The development of EIB has allowed this to happen more easily for Cañari families, as it has provided an alternative to the Hispanic education system, empowering the community by continuing to teach younger generations about indigenous values and principles which risk being lost by the influence of the dominant culture. The Cañari, men and women together, have paved their own path of development in recent decades, empowering themselves along the way.

## Chapter V

# Cañari Women and Higher Education

In Ecuador's 2010 census, Cañar was one of the three provinces possessing the highest illiteracy rate. For every 1000 indigenous women over the age of 15, 253 were recorded as illiterate (Camacho Cercado, 2012: 161-166).<sup>163</sup> Likewise, the average number of years schooling for women over the age of 24 in Cañar province in 2010 was recorded as 7.3, in contrast to 8 years for men. Following the *cantones* of Suscal and Déleg, where illiteracy was identified at 33.5 and 17.8 per cent respectively, the cantón of Cañar was the third in the province with a high illiteracy rate, recorded as 17.4 per cent (INEC, 2010). Despite these figures, however, there has been an increasing number of indigenous women in Cañar, particularly in their mid to late twenties, who have obtained university level degrees. This appears a notable achievement in relation to the educational attainments of indigenous women throughout Ecuador.

Within the data there are a number of university educated Cañari women present, whose narratives are worth exploring. As university is considered an avenue for empowerment, due to exposure to new ideas that allow women to challenge the status quo, increase their confidence levels, and expand participation in the family and wider community (Maslak and Singhal, 2008; Stromquist, 2002), this topic is relevant for analysis. This is especially the case given the increasing numbers of female Cañari professionals in recent years. The purpose of this chapter is to examine the processes that several of these women have gone through to earn a university level education. Further, the chapter considers what factors may have facilitated their educational achievements, while also highlighting the challenges encountered. Equally, the chapter considers the outcomes of higher education for these women as individuals, and in some cases, for their wider communities. Within these narratives, some of the women discuss the concept of empowerment directly, providing indicators as to what the notion may mean to them as individuals.<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>163</sup> Cotopaxi and Imbabura in the northern sierra were the other provinces with high levels of illiteracy (Camacho Cercado, 2012).

<sup>164</sup> It is noted, however, that not every participant contained in this chapter discusses "empowerment".



The chapter is structured in the following way. Section 5.1 considers a family whose father was seen in Chapter IV. As observed, members of Quilloac community, such as Daniel, Miguel and his brother Segundo, were key protagonists in the process towards establishing education for the Cañari. It is Segundo and two of his daughters that are discussed in this section. In doing so, the section highlights how parental influence impacts on educational decision-making, in addition to the matters of sibling birth rank and family economics as key factors in the process of university education for this particular family unit. Further, by focusing on Segundo's youngest daughter in the second half of the section, important issues such as conjugal relations, motherhood and living away from home are highlighted. These are recurrent themes in other parts of the chapter. Section 5.2 focuses on three women who did not marry, or have children during university, but who have acquired prominent roles within the wider community as a consequence of their education. Section 5.3 returns to the matter of marriage and children in greater detail by considering three more participants, all of who became wives and mothers during university, yet with varied outcomes. Ultimately, what this chapter demonstrates is that the process by which women in Cañar become higher educated is unique to each individual, and that that process can be dynamic and complex. The process towards, and outcomes of, higher education for these women are dependent on the decisions they make and the support networks around them. Thus, their empowerment is multi-layered.

## ***5.1 Birth Rank, Economics and Higher Education***

### ***Segundo, Karina and Alejandra***

Segundo is the last of eight, born in 1948 on the hacienda. He has six children; three girls and three boys. He finished his college education in his thirties, followed by a bachelor degree as a mature student. As a youngster he was one of the first in Quilloac to finish primary school and the only sibling to complete secondary school. Two of his sisters are illiterate. Segundo consequently places great importance on education, reflected in his community participation vis-à-vis education in Quilloac. Nevertheless, when it came to his children's education, family economics and the birth rank of specific children were clearly linked.

Karina is Segundo's eldest child, born in 1971. When Karina was a child, life was difficult economically for her family. She recounted how, in order to compensate for the lack of resources such as socks and shoes, she would exchange her *polleras* with her friends' socks, to see what wearing them was like. This was an important memory, chuckling away as she told it, explaining how:

... I had the socks secretly. When my parents went out, I would put the socks on and admire them in the mirror. I don't know why I did this, maybe because they didn't have money to buy socks. So for a second I would put them on, and hide them straight away. I couldn't keep them on! That is a memory I have of my sad life. I guess maybe as my parents had to deal with school clothes etc. for six children, they maybe had low economic resources to buy things. That is bad-luck.<sup>165</sup>

Being the first-born put Karina at a disadvantage, as her parents could not provide all that she needed due to responsibilities to her siblings. However, she recounted how she received a pair of canvas sandals in fifth grade, which 'was something very exciting and made me happy. This was the first gift from my parents'.<sup>166</sup> It appears that her family's poverty significantly impacted Karina as a child. Nonetheless, she finished school up to eighth grade, and was very happy because:

I hadn't got married. I was very proud of this. My cousin and I finished together as single girls. All the others had already got married. We watched how they suffered from marital abuse, from lack of support from parents. They always suffered. They were not free and happy like we were. We were relaxed and happy.<sup>167</sup>

This tells how, in the past, marrying at a young age amongst the Cañari was common. Nevertheless, when Karina wanted to continue her studies at university, her parents said, 'there is no money to spend on you going to university', because she still had five siblings that needed supporting. For this reason, her parents told

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<sup>165</sup> ... *yo así ocultamente tenía las medias. Cuando mis padres salían, yo sabía poner las medias, y sabía estar así mirándose en el espejo así. No se porque que es lo que paso, porque no dieron comprando, y vi las medias. Entonces, un ratito ponía, en seguida escondía. Ya no podía poner (chuckles!). Eso es mí, una vida triste que tengo de recuerdo. No séé, a lo mejor mis padres por tener seis hijos tenían que atender a los estudios en el vestuario, en todo. A lo mejor pareció estaban con bajo recursos económicos que no dieron comprando. No sé. Eso es una negreta, sí.* Interview: Cañar, 5 July 2011.

<sup>166</sup> ... *algo emocionante, algo alegre, digamos. Primera vez obtener ese regalo de mis padres.* Interview: Cañar, 5 July 2011.

<sup>167</sup> *Entonces, en cuanto a los estudios, yo termine así, como les digo, felizmente señorita hasta octavo año. No case. Eso era mi orgullo, que termine yo con mi prima, los docitos, fuimos señoritas. Las demás eran todas casadas. Veíamos como sufrían las mujeres por el maltrato de los esposos, por el no apoyo de los padres, por los hijos mismos. Ellas siempre siempre sufrían. No eran así, libres, alegres, como nosotros. Entonces pasábamos así tranquilas, alegres.* Interview: Cañar, 5 July 2011.

her to become a teacher: 'so there was no opportunity for me to continue studying'.<sup>168</sup>

Born in 1987, Alejandra argues that her familial position has provided some advantages in life that her older siblings did not experience, particularly her sisters. This she states is because she has been 'very spoilt, too spoilt' as a consequence of being the youngest.<sup>169</sup> Firstly, as a child, Alejandra had different roles to play within the family. She was not expected to help work land but only assist her mother with the animals at home. As an adolescent she would participate in the *mingas* on Mondays and Fridays, replacing the work of her mother in the afternoons. Alejandra also experienced a benefit from being the youngest in relation to education:

Well, due to being very spoilt, I have the advantage in that my father said, "look for a career that you like". As generally my parents would say to my sisters, "no daughter, there is no money, you can only study at college and no further. You finish and become a teacher". On the other hand, as I was the last daughter, they said, "go to university, we will send you to the university where *you want* to go. Choose the one you like, and if you want, we send you outside of the country. I had a treasure in that way."<sup>170</sup>

This contrast between parental attitudes serves to highlight the significance that family economics can play in the educational attainment of children. In Chapter IV, Segundo is referenced as saying that he encouraged his children to study (page 145). This is notably true, yet there is a discrepancy in the level of education each child has achieved through his support.

Alejandra commented that the motivation for her to continue with university education not only came from the fact that she enjoyed it, but it was also due to her parent's influence:

My father said to me, "but my love, if you get married and have children, what are you going to do?" ... I was very pampered. I didn't have the experience that my siblings did; they worked, they knew how to work in the countryside and I don't! So my mother said to me, "my love you are a spoilt one. How are you going to live here, what are you going to do in the countryside? You don't even know how to raise a cinchona tree, a hen". My mother said to me, "How will you live? No, you have to continue studying.

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<sup>168</sup> *Entonces ya no había la oportunidad de continuar estudiando.* Interview: Cañar, 5 July 2011.

<sup>169</sup> ... "*muy amada...demasiada animada*". Interview: Cuenca, 15 June 2011.

<sup>170</sup> *Bueno por ser muy amada, tengo una ventaja de que mi papi decía 'busca tu carrera, la que te gusta' porque generalmente [a] mis hermanas, ...mis padres dijeron, 'no hija, no hay plata, tienes que estudiar, digamos, colegio y nada más. Acabas y haz profesora allá. En cambio, yo como fui la última hija, 'ándate a la universidad, te vamos a mandar a la Universidad donde QUIERAS, escoge que te guste, si quieres, te mandamos fuera del país..bueno'. Tenía un tesoro así.* Interview: Cuenca, 15 June 2011.

Despite me as I am, without shoes, hats, living disorganised, you have to study”. So they began supporting me.<sup>171</sup>

Alejandra describes herself as being rebellious during her adolescence, and got married at the age of sixteen. She had planned to go to college and study biological chemistry, as she enjoyed everything that was related to health sciences, and later attend Universidad San Francisco de Quito. However, once she got married, this altered. Although her parents said they would continue to support her in going to university, the options she previously had over study location changed:

Luckily my parents continued helping me. As the tradition in my *comuna* is that, when you get married, you live apart, and you have nothing related to your parents name... but I say the advantage of being the last is lucky. My parents helped me once again. They said, “you are young and we don’t want you staying that way. We will continue to support you. But the only disadvantage is that you can only go to Cuenca. We will not support you in going to San Francisco de Quito”. Those were my punishments.<sup>172</sup>

As such, Alejandra began university as a young woman. Karina, on the other hand, spent sixteen years working as a teacher before beginning university part-time at long distance. She previously aspired to study psychology at university, but as a consequence of her various years of work experience, began studying a degree in basic education.

Despite two different processes occurring for two members of the same family, both can be attributed to the influence of their parents, particularly Segundo. He is a driven and determined character who came to understand the importance of education and its significance in life. Segundo’s respect for learning has been passed down to his children, as Alejandra says that her parents were some of the first

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<sup>171</sup> *Mi motivo para seguir...si más bien era por el gusto y porque, más también es que era la influencia de mis papas. Mi papa me decía 'pero hija, si es te casas, ya tienes tu hijo, que vas a hacer?'... es que yo era muy mimada. Yo no, yo no, yo no viví la experiencia de mis hermanos; trabajar por ellos, trabajar, saben trabajar en el campo y yo no! Entonces me dijo 'pero hija vos es una mimada una. Y como vas a vivir aquí, que vas a hacer en el campo, ni sabes crear un quino, una gallina' así me decía mi mami. 'Cómo vas a vivir? No, tienes que seguir estudiando. Y yo como sea, aunque me quede sin zapatos, sin sombreros, vivo descasas, pero vos tenés que estudiar'. Entonces ellos empezaron a apoyarme.* Interview: Cuenca, 15 June 2011.

<sup>172</sup> *Por suerte mis papas me seguían ayudando porque la tradición de mi comuna es que ya cuando te casa, te casaste, tienes tu vida aparte, ya no tienes nada lo que es a nombre de mis papas, así...pero por suerte yo digo eso es la ventaja ser última. Mis papas me ayudaron otra vez. Me ayudaron y dijeron 'ya pues eres jovencita, no quiero que te quedes allí. Te vamos a seguir apoyando. Pero lo que es desventaja solo tienes que ir a Cuenca, nada más. No puedo ayudarte en que vayas a la San Francisco de Quito... tampoco vas a Cuba'. Esos fueron mis castigos (chuckles).* Interview: Cuenca, 15 June 2011.

people to educate their children in Quilloac.<sup>173</sup> Karina also noted how her success of becoming a teacher had been attributed to the support of her parents:

...for example, I graduated in the third class of teachers. But we were considered to be the first professional women in the *comuna*. And so I watched people admire and thank my father, saying, "look, how your daughters study, how your daughters move forward, we congratulate you for supporting your daughters, and you for continuing with studies". And we were the examples, let's say, for other women to continue studying.<sup>174</sup>

While interviewing Alejandra, I asked about her experience of university. She told me that she had a child when she was 17, who died a month later from pneumonia. Alejandra tearfully told me that that is when her "fight" began:

Firstly it is a loss, and from then on began another failure, and another and another, which were traumatic for me. For me finishing university is going to be a victory because I have gone through so many things.<sup>175</sup>

Here she referred primarily to becoming a mother again, confronting living costs, and experiencing difficulties in her conjugal relationship:

Besides having another daughter, and watching her by my side, I put up with my husband, and economics too, as you don't have the freedom to ask for money from your parents. I can't say, 'Dad, I need money for books and materials'. Studying orthodontics, the materials are expensive and it is really hard. Sometimes I would eat, others I wouldn't... I'd study at night and spend the day with my daughter. During exams I would barely sleep in order to look after my daughter. I maybe slept two or three hours. So the first three years were a sacrifice.<sup>176</sup>

After Alejandra began a degree in orthodontics she and her husband separated for several months. Alejandra believed that because they married so young, followed by the loss of their baby, they did not understand each other well. They lived separate

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<sup>173</sup> Interview: Cuenca, 15 June 2011.

<sup>174</sup> ...yo por ejemplo gradué, salí de maestro profesora de la tercera promoción. Pero fuimos consideradas como primeras mujeres profesionales de la comuna. Entonces la gente le admiraba y agradecían. Yo le vi agradecía a mi padre, diciendo que 'vea, como como estudien sus hijas, como avanzan sus hijas, felicitamos por apoyar a sus hijas, y Ud. también continuar con los estudios'. Entonces felicitaban a mi padre. Entonces fuimos las primeras profesionales digamos. Y nosotros fuimos los ejemplos, digamos, de otras compañeras, de otros jóvenes que continúan, continuando digamos estudiando. Interview: Cañar, 5 July 2011.

<sup>175</sup> Desde allí empezó mi lucha. Primero es un fracaso y desde me fracaso empezó otro fracaso y otro fracaso, otro fracaso, que era traumas para mí en la niñez. Pero que le diría. Por ejemplo, para mi acabar la universidad va a ser un triunfo porque tuve que pasar por tantas cosas. Interview: Cuenca, 15 June 2011.

<sup>176</sup> ...además tener otra hijita, tenía que ver a mi hija al lado, aguanta las cosas en mi esposo, y la economía mismo, porque ya no tienes la libertad de pedir plata a mis papas. Por ejemplo, decir 'Papi, no hay tal, necesito para libros, necesito para misma materiales de ontología'. Estudio ontología, y las materiales son caros y es bien difícil. A veces pasaba comiendo, a veces no comía. Las noches estudio y de día paso con mi hija. Las exámenes igual, amanecía ni dormía una horita allá en el día, acompañando un poco mi hija también, dormía 2 horas, 3 horas y ya. Fue un sacrificio, mi primero, segundo y tercer año. Interview: Cuenca, 15 June 2011.

lives, in which he was a musician and she simply wanted to concentrate on her studies. He would go out at night, returning home late, attempting to ill-treat Alejandra due to drunkenness:

After the trauma of losing our daughter, we were like, 'you have your life and I have mine', until a certain point. Up until the point that we exploded... So we had to separate. We said, 'if you want to separate, let's separate'. So we separated for eight months and I was on my own. It was hard.<sup>177</sup>

During the same time as their separation, Alejandra was struggling with her anatomy module and failed the class. Another family member told her that her husband had been unfaithful while they were separated. This caused Alejandra to fail the module exam and repeat the course; 'It was terrible. Nobody knew or could understand it'.<sup>178</sup> This situation that Alejandra encountered serves to demonstrate how emotional trauma through domestic relationships can impact on educational achievement, potentially undermining processes of empowerment that might be occurring as a consequence of studying at university.

Over time, Alejandra said she began to move on, and one of her professors gave her a job as an assistant in a clinic in Cuenca; 'I began to gain strength', she said.<sup>179</sup> However, at this point, her husband realised that Alejandra was growing distant:

He realised that I wasn't putting any interest in him and he began to look for me, win me over, and send me flowers, chocolates, whatever he could to recuperate things. He'd cry over the phone, calling me.<sup>180</sup>

Alejandra decided to give their relationship another opportunity. Two months after they got back together, Alejandra fell pregnant again. Though this time she described having another child as being a much more positive experience:

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<sup>177</sup> *Después del fracaso de mi hija cambio, éramos "tú a tu vida y yo a mi vida", hasta a un cierto punto. Hasta un punto que explotamos. Mi esposo, él es músico. Somos bien opuestos. Entonces, yo quería mi privacidad, yo quería mi tranquilidad, nada de bulla, nada de molestia, es para poder estudiar, concentrarme. En cambio mi esposo cogía la sala, y tocar cosas eléctricas. Ya bueno entonces ya nos fuimos poniendo reglas. "Vos de tal hora a tal hora, pues en seguida". Pero unión así, no, no funcionara. Y mi esposo, quería salir de las noches a los conciertos, salir con sus amigos, salir a sus farras, y yo tenía que estar en la casa. Y también, en cambio, mi esposo llegaba en las noches, en las madrugadas. Sería 4 de la mañana, 5 de la mañana, borracho. Y a veces con los celos, a veces intentó maltratarme y todo. Era tan inmaduro o algo así, 'porque me ama, me pega, porque me ama, me celas. Bueno ya. Y tuvimos que separarnos. Dijimos 'no, ya, si quieres separamos, separamos'. Y nos separamos casi 8 meses y yo aquí solita. Sí, era difícil. Interview: Cuenca, 15 June 2011.*

<sup>178</sup> *Era terrible. O sea nadie no sabía ni entendía. Interview: Cuenca, 15 June 2011.*

<sup>179</sup> *Empecé a coger fuerza. Interview: Cuenca, 15 June 2011.*

<sup>180</sup> *...ya olvidando de mi esposo, mi esposo empieza dar de cuenta que ya yo no le tome interés a él, empieza buscarme, empieza de conquistar, mandarme flores, chocolates, lo que sea, pero contarle recuperar. Lloraba por el celular, me llamaba. Interview: Cuenca, 15 June 2011.*

With her [daughter] everything changed. My husband changed his behaviours, he only went out a little, he always let me know, he never raised his voice to me, he always accompanied me to see my parents, he helped me. From then on I began to change.<sup>181</sup>

Alejandra and her husband had learnt from their previous experience, each altering their behaviours for the sake of their child and their relationship. Accommodating the role of motherhood alongside her studies, nevertheless, was difficult for Alejandra:

Up until six months all they do is sleep. So it was great when she slept, as I could study longer. But older than six months, when they begin to walk, that's when time disappears, as you're always following behind them. If you don't have a car then you're afraid to carry them everywhere. Above all, you have little time for university. There were only ever one or two hours spare. It's hard. Living here without your parents is hard, as I couldn't leave her with my mother while I went to class.<sup>182</sup>

Family networks are extremely important, especially in indigenous circles, as extended family is regularly relied upon for childcare. Both Alejandra and her husband went out to classes in the morning, and she would have to leave her daughter in her cot, hoping that she would not wake until her husband returned. She said:

My husband told me that when he would get back, sometimes she would still be sleeping, others she would be crying. It was horrible. That is why we had to go and live with my cousin. She studied at night so was free in the day. So I left my daughter with her, that's how we lived.<sup>183</sup>

As such, in the absence of her parents, Alejandra relied on other family members for help. A significant aspect of Alejandra's narrative is that, in the end,

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<sup>181</sup> *Entonces ya con ella cambio todo creo. Mi esposo también cambio su forma de ser, ya no salía, bueno salía un poco, siempre me avisaba, nunca ya no me alzaba la vos, nada de esas cosas, siempre me acompañaba de mi papi, mi mami, me apoyaba. Desde allí creo un poco ya fui cambiando.* Interview: Cuenca, 15 June 2011.

<sup>182</sup> ... todavía ternita hasta los 6 meses siempre pasan durmiendo. Entonces para mí es una alegría que duerma, y yo mientras duerme yo estudio lo que sea, algo largo, lo que sea. Pero ya cuando ya más de los 6 meses, ya como empiezan caminar, ese es, eh si te coge tiempo, coge la bastante porque tienes estar atrás, si es que no tienes un carrito o si tienes un carrito igual, te da miedo que caiga, lo que sea. Y además de lo más afecto que tienes que dar y eso parece muy poco tiempo lo que es tiempo del, tiempo sobre la universidad. Solo habían una hora o dos horas huecas así. Es bien difícil. Aquí en la ciudad vivir sin mamá, sin papá es bien difícil, porque yo dijera es que mi mami vive, yo dejara a mi hija con mi mami ya, sea, me voy. Pero no. Interview: Cuenca, 15 June 2011.

<sup>183</sup> *Mi esposo me contaba que después, cuando el llegaba, a veces estaba todavía durmiendo o ya a veces estaba llorando, o algo así. Sí, era feo. Por eso tuvimos que ir a vivir con una familia más. Habían aquí primos, fuimos vivir con ellos porque mi prima en cambio estudiaba por las noches, y en el día pasaba en la casa. Entonces yo le dejaba a ella, pasamos así.* Interview: Cuenca, 15 June 2011.

her parents had the economic means to support her by sending a nanny from Quilloac to assist her:

In my third year my parents helped me, they were my right hand. They said, 'you have a daughter and we're going to send you a nanny. They sent me a nanny from my community who helped me. She also washed, ironed, helped with housework, cleaning, besides having time for my daughter. And you have to have a lot of time for my daughter too, to keep an eye on her.'<sup>184</sup>

The financial capital that her parents accessed to provide Alejandra a nanny evidently helped her balance motherhood with her university commitments. Moreover, it is also clear from Alejandra's story that she had a positive relationship with her own mother. Along with Alejandra's father, her mother was very supportive and afforded significant amounts of familial social capital to help Alejandra at university:

I am very close to my mother. She used to send me food from there and everything. That's why I say my parents were like my right hand. Without them, I have no idea. I don't know how it would have been. Mother would send me potatoes, whatever, in a sack to the bus station and I'd go and collect it. Besides, they'd also sent me what they could to survive – money for the week. My mother-in-law then helped me obtain a scholarship from Judy in my second year.<sup>185</sup>

This latter point was significant because the costs incurred from Alejandra's course from the second year onwards increased; 'my father began to worry, wondering how we were to do it. I was going to take out a loan but my mother-in-law suggested we approach Judy'.<sup>186</sup> Hence, using extended familial connections, Alejandra sought an alternative way to maintain herself and her studies.

Since completing her degree, Alejandra has become a successful orthodontist and feels that she has now fulfilled one of her dreams, potentially generating a sense

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<sup>184</sup> *En tercer año mis padres me ayudaron. Mi mami y mi papi eran mi mano derecha, mi Dios así. Porque ellos me dijeron ya 'tienes una hijita y te voy a dar una niñera'. Entonces me mandaron una niñera de mi comunidad acá, entonces ella me ayudaba. Aun así es lavar, planchar, quehaceres domésticos, limpieza, euph, todo un día. Y más aun cuando con mi hija, tienes que tener tiempo. Tiempo, bastante tiempo porque ya tienes que ver esa, es un hijo.* Interview: Cuenca, 15 June 2011.

<sup>185</sup> *Soy muy apegada a mi mami, entonces si no veo a ella... Y mi mami, ella era la que mandaba comida desde allá y todo eso. Por ya digo mi mami y mi papi fueron mi mano derecho. Yo sin ellos, no, no sé. No sé que hubiese sido. Mi mami, me manda la comida desde allá - papás, todo lo que sea desde allá, hecho en un saco, así me manda al terminal. Yo de aquí, voy a traer, voy y entrego al terminal. Y a partir de eso, me manda en cambio lo que pueda subsistir en la semana - plata. Y hay un transcurso también que en el segundo año ya mi suegra, en cambio, me ayudó lo que es con la beca de la Judy.* Interview: Cuenca, 15 June 2011.

<sup>186</sup> *Mi papi empezó a asustarse, decía 'pucha, es muy cara. Como hacemos?'. Y me iba a sacar un préstamo para ir poder a estudiar. Pero mi suegra, en cambio me decía, 'si quieres, vamos y pertenecer a esta fundación'.* Interview: Cuenca, 15 June 2011.



of personal empowerment. It would seem that the outcome of her higher education and acquired skills have been positive for both Alejandra and her community, and she is using her education with direct affect. Thus, her work is aimed at benefiting a collective whole, in addition to developing personal satisfaction. Likewise, actively engaging in public spaces and having an income source allows for her economic empowerment. At the same time, however, Alejandra also recognised her absence in her daughter's upbringing during her formative years, reflecting on her husband's more prominent role:

At times it gives me something to think about, because I haven't spent a lot of time with my daughter. My husband has much more. He works in the mornings and is free in the afternoons at home. So he spends more time with her, bathes her, answers her questions, and talks to her. In contrast, I spend literally only hours with her, one or two or when I come to have lunch. She says, 'mummy, I want to play', and it upsets me as I have to leave again.<sup>187</sup>

In the same way being a student had been a challenge alongside parenting, Alejandra appeared to also be struggling with the issue of parenthood against paid work. While she acknowledged that she had reached one of her life goals in obtaining her degree and employment, the extent to which this compromised her relationship with her daughter was also on Alejandra's mind. This scenario underlines tensions that can exist for women who are working mothers, and the challenges they face in balancing these two different spheres of life. In Alejandra's case, the presence of her husband helps to fill the parental gap for her daughter, yet this does not necessarily compensate for the guilt that Alejandra experiences.<sup>188</sup>

## **5.2 Social Capital, Economics and Personal Agency**

### **Julia**

Julia was born in 1980. She is the third of five children, with two older sisters and a younger brother and sister. Julia told me that she did not complete her primary

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<sup>187</sup> *A veces sí me da cosa por que no, yo por ejemplo no me he compartido mucho tiempo con mi hija. Más que yo es mi esposo. Mi esposo, por ejemplo trabajo en las mañanas y en las tardes se queda en la casa. Y mi esposo lo que pasa más con ella y él es que a veces le hace a bañar, habla con ella, explica por qué, por qué, por qué. En cambio, yo paso horas, sinceramente paso horitas, una hora, dos horas, o solo luego para almorzar, y a mi hija dice 'mami quiero jugar', o sea así me duele porque me tengo que ir, ya.* Interview: Cuenca, 15 June 2011.

<sup>188</sup> A noteworthy point to make here, in relation to the narratives of Karina and Alejandra, is that Alejandra's Spanish appears to be significantly better than Karina's despite her errors. This could be attributed to Alejandra's higher level education, or the possible evolution in the level of Spanish spoken among those born later.

education as a child because her parents took her out of school when she was in fourth grade. Her brother attended in her place, so she ‘didn’t finish school adequately’.<sup>189</sup> Julia attributes her parent’s behaviour towards girls’ education to colonialism and the associated negative ideologies it brought with it over the role of women. When asked if education was important to her family when she was a child, Julia responded: ‘Let’s say no. I think mainly because of *machismo*... my brother who is younger than me had to finish [college], and us, as we were girls, we were put to one side’.<sup>190</sup> In this sense, Julia encountered gender inequalities within her domestic situation from an early age. Julia’s mother attended school until second grade, when Julia’s grandparents removed her from formal education. Although illiterate, Julia’s mother was required to learn how to speak Spanish due to engagement with non-Quichua speakers. Julia’s father is literate, but did not finish primary school. Neither of Julia’s parents worked outside of agriculture when she was a child; they produced maize, potatoes, vegetables and barley.<sup>191</sup>

After Julia was taken out of school, she worked as a domestic cleaner. She then attended a distance learning school as an adolescent, studying on Saturdays. She tried to enter college in Cuenca, but failed the entrance exam due to non-attendance, so went to La Salle Distance College as an alternative.<sup>192</sup> In the third semester, she transferred to her local bilingual college to complete her *bachillerato*.

The important point in relation to Julia’s educational process is that, as her family gave little importance to girls’ education, Julia finished school and went to college of her own accord. This demonstrates agency from an early age and a capacity to make decisions and personal choices about her life, despite attitudes within her familial structure. To further this chosen path of becoming educated, the same personal agency was present in her decision-making to access higher education.

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<sup>189</sup> ...*en la escuela, no terminé o sea como es adecuada*. Interview: Cuenca, 14 June 2011

<sup>190</sup> *Digamos que no, porque realmente creo que quizás por el machismo... mi niño que es menor a mí, tenía que terminar pues, nosotros como éramos mujeres creo que nos dejó al lado*. Interview: Cuenca, 14 June 2011

<sup>191</sup> Julia explained that today, her mother spends a lot of time each week travelling to the coast to sell pulses, garden vegetables, potatoes, etc. Julia’s younger brother and father spend more time at home working the land and livestock. Julia observed her parent’s specific roles as sharing the responsibilities and work between them. Her mother’s absence at home means that previous family routines, such as going to mass on Sundays, no longer exist. However, the economic resources that her work brings, besides cheaper fruits from the coast, are a positive advantage for her family.

<sup>192</sup> La Salle in Ecuador is a network of educational institutions belonging to the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools that falls under the Catholic umbrella of the Lasallian family. Official website: <http://www.lasalle.org/en>

She did not seek the support of her parents but had the independence and ability to decide that she was going to pursue her dream of going to university. She therefore overlooked the negative views that people in her community had. Julia said:

Of course, people there [back home] told me it [university] was expensive and impossible for rural dwellers to go to... The dream was to do whatever course, but here in the university of Cuenca... The first time I came I met an indigenous woman who helped me arrange a scholarship via the university. It wasn't much but it helped me...<sup>193</sup>

Not only did Julia decide to go to university, she was also proactive in achieving it. It is not known what the scholarship requirements Julia had to meet were in order to receive it, but the fact that she as an indigenous woman received monetary support from the university is significant. It would appear that neither ethnicity nor gender placed Julia at a disadvantage in this sense.

At the time of interview, Julia was coming to end of her degree. She had followed two disciplines of study. At the beginning, when the university was helping to pay her fees, she studied social work.<sup>194</sup> Then, when the government made higher education free, she decided to pursue her interest in psychology:

Being next to the Psychology Department, I said, 'as it [social work] is working with society, with people, I have to know something about the psychology of people. I'll go and spend a year in the other faculty learning more about psychology'... I went and enrolled myself while I was still doing the other course. When I was in second year, I began psychology. A year later I said, 'I'm going to continue; I'm going to finish [psychology]. Two or three more years are nothing. So, I have two careers... I knew I had to know more about psychology in order to understand people because I was going to work with them. Now I see that the two combine together. The one is working with societies and the basic needs of people, whereas in contrast, psychology is about orientation and guidance.'<sup>195</sup>

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<sup>193</sup> *Supuestamente decían que es costoso, que imposible, o sea, los que salíamos de allá. Y que pasa que ya vení acá y conocí a una compañera indígena, y ella me ayudó a gestionar una beca aquí en la universidad. No era mucho pero ya me ayudaba.* Interview: Cuenca, 14 June 2011.

<sup>194</sup> To continue receiving this scholarship the student needed to complete each year successfully.

<sup>195</sup> *Y voy y me inscribo en la otra facultad, que ya estaba terminando la otra. Terminé cuando estaba en segundo ciclo me incorporé ya en otra carrera. Un añito más que esté en otro, algo de psicología, ya no voy a la casa. Total ya no porque ya pasó el año, dije 'bueno, voy a seguir, voy a terminar ya falta dos años, tres años, es poco el termine'. Tengo dos carreras. ...como estaba al ladito de la facultad de psicología, dije 'no, pues así, ya como es trabajar con la sociedad en sí, con la gente', yo dije 'bueno tengo que conocer algo más de psicología de la gente'. Y yo dije 'voy a estar un añito, en otra facultad conociendo más de psicología'. Ya nació que tengo que saber algo de psicología más, para comprender a la gente porque voy a tratar con otra gente, así. Y ahora veo por ahí también, o sea, yo creo que compaginan los dos. Uno es trabajar con sociedades en sí, necesidades básicas de la gente todo eso, pero en cambio, psicología es orientación.* Interview: Cuenca, 14 June 2011.

This demonstrates a number of issues. Firstly, it shows how Julia was aware of the need to expand her knowledge and skills in order to accommodate potential requirements of her future profession. It also reveals how Julia was able to envision a path of action towards a purposeful goal that could benefit her on a cognitive level, but that could also benefit others. In addition, she expresses how she subsequently realised *how* both could work together simultaneously. Likewise, Julia was able to visualise how she could apply these subjects practically:

... so, in the same way I did not have guidance in college, the door opened for me. In other words, I can work in a college and give guidance to young people; they can find the correct course that they want.<sup>196</sup>

Finally, the decision to extend her length of time studying demonstrates the lack of structural limitations; she did not have any dependents or familial responsibilities that required her to finish her studies quickly, nor personal financial reasons to find employment in a hurry. Julia's decisions were based on seizing opportunities that met her individual goals and needs.

Given education was not considered very important to Julia's family, I asked where her motivation to go to university came from. She explained that she lacked professional guidance at college, so was at a loss when it came to deciding on the right course. Instead, she relied upon other connections for help:

So then, a friend said, 'look, here I am in law, over there is social work, which is a nice course. You can work in institutions, in NGOs...' So I said, 'cool, I'll enrol in that'. Therefore I began that course.<sup>197</sup>

Julia clearly accessed the advice of other people in her vicinity, such as friends, drawing on the social capital she had available; in this case, a fellow student with knowledge and previous experience of the subject.

I was curious to know where Julia's drive for studying originated, particularly as she is the only child in her family to graduate from university. Laughing, she commented, 'maybe from my childhood, as I spent time here in Cuenca, I imagined

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<sup>196</sup> *Y en cambio como yo no tuve orientación en el colegio, como que me abrió más la puerta. O sea, decir que yo puedo trabajar en colegio, puedo orientar a los jóvenes, pueden coger la carrera más correcta que ellos quieran.* Interview: Cuenca, 14 June 2011.

<sup>197</sup> *Y de ahí una compañera me dice "bueno, aquí yo estoy en derecho, aquí hay trabajo social, esto es una bonita carrera, que puedes trabajar en algunas instituciones, igual en ONGs..." y digo "chévere, que voy a entrar en eso" decía yo. Y a raíz de eso yo entré ya a hacer yo.* Interview: Cuenca, 14 June 2011.

what it would be like to study'.<sup>198</sup> This suggests that having access to, and working in, the urban environment as a youngster led Julia to observe potential opportunities that she may not have otherwise encountered in rural Cañar - it provided her with a future dream to be fulfilled. Nevertheless, I asked Julia to further explain what she meant:

It depends on the culture where you have grown up, the environment. Let's put us in communities. They often paint university as being difficult, that you wake up studying, that you don't sleep, that it is hard. Hard to live away from home, you have no food, no money, etc. But, a lot of study I believe happens when you put a lot of effort in. I mean, there are students here from Cuenca, who have studied, because they say they have better opportunities to manage themselves. But equally, they have failed the year, fallen behind. It is like, because they have had more, they think, 'I can'. But *I* haven't failed a year or fallen behind.<sup>199</sup>

Indicating how she valued education and knew the opportunity she had to attend university could not be taken for granted, Julia demonstrates determination. She also establishes how indigenous people have the capability to achieve just as much as those from the dominant culture.

Despite her parent's apparent lack of interest in education, I enquired if Julia had received support from her family during her time at university. Interestingly, I noticed that when I asked this question, a lot of people translated the word '*apoyo*', meaning 'support', as financial support. Julia said she worked during the holidays to help buy university resources, suggesting that she was resourceful and productive with her time. In addition, it highlighted she did not have domestic responsibilities or other external expectations placed upon her that required her to return home to Cañar. Her cousin worked in a children's nursery, and Julia went to work there during her holidays. By using familial connections for employment, Julia was able to save money, which she would use the following year to buy what she needed. This

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<sup>198</sup> ... *quizás en mi niñez, como pasaba aquí en Cuenca, me imagino que era, que estudiar, no sé*. Interview: Cuenca, 14 June 2011.

<sup>199</sup> ... *depende de la sociedad donde ha crecido, el ambiente. Pongamos en comunidades. Yo salí, creo que yo era la primera que salí. O sea de mi comunidad, pero a raíz de eso luego ya vino, vinieron algunos y ahora ya están acá varias chicas y chicos. O sea, muchas veces nos pintaban de que la universidad es difícil, que ahí amanece estudiando, que no duermes, o sea sí es duro, sí es duro o sea cuestión vivir lejos de la familia, la alimentación que te termina, que ya no tienes plata todo eso. Pero, bastante estudio creo que si es que uno pone esfuerzo en cualquier lugar. Igual hay chicos que, que son de aquí de Cuenca, han tenido un estudio, o sea, de aquí de Cuenca, o sea del centro urbano. Porque siempre dicen que tienen más posibilidades de desenvolverse. Pero igual han perdido el año, han arrastrado materias. O sea eso como que aun han sentido más, o sea, yo si puedo si aún no he perdido el año y no he restado materia digo*. Interview: Cuenca, 14 June 2011.

also shows that she had good money management skills, besides not needing to be financially reliant on family: 'I have not asked my mother for anything, or said, "hey, I need money" for this or that. At times my dad would give me ten or fifteen dollars, which I was thankful for, but I've never said it was too little'.<sup>200</sup> On the other hand, Julia explained she received support from her parents in another way: 'They sent me moral support by sending me a sack of food via the bus from Cañar to Cuenca, that I'd go and collect from the bus terminal'.<sup>201</sup> This was clearly helpful, and something Julia appreciated, besides showing that her parents were concerned about her physical well-being.

In addition to holiday work, Julia also volunteered in a nearby community at a literacy school for adults and young people on weekends during term-time, as she rarely returned home to Cañar:

I thought, 'well, I'm here at the weekends so why not give a hand there?' As the basic thing was primary education and we gave classes. And upon leaving, they were encouraged, some going on to a distance learning college, and some have also gone to university.<sup>202</sup>

Julia very occasionally received \$40-50 from the school. Her work there, however, was not intended to provide financial support, but more as an opportunity to use her skills and help make a difference to other's lives. Julia also had an interest in working with young people after finishing university. Additionally, Julia's volunteering further demonstrates her ability to be practical and creative with her spare time, thinking "outside the box" to the benefit of her future profession. Likewise, she also had aspirations to continue studying in the future:

I aspire to get a masters, or doctorate, whatever I can, whilst I work - to cover the costs. Because it is hard at times, as the master's degree is very expensive. I'd like to do a master in something like project development or local management.<sup>203</sup>

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<sup>200</sup> *Yo no, o sea, no he pedido a mi mami, decir "oiga tiene que dar para tal cosa". Mi papi a veces--claro me daba a veces que sé 10 dólares, 15 dólares, yo gracias, pero nunca he dicho está poquito.* Interview: Cuenca, 14 June 2011.

<sup>201</sup> *... apoyo moral, en eso sí me mandaba . . . digamos que si no me iba me mandaban en el carro de Cañar acá en Cuenca, del cruce este donde se está haciendo los carros, de la agencia de los carros allá, así han mandado un paquetito y recibía en la terminal, en la cuestión de alimentación.* Interview: Cuenca, 14 June 2011.

<sup>202</sup> *Decía, o sea entonces "estoy aquí fines de semana, por qué no colaborar allá?". Porque lo básico que es la escuela, primaria. ...dábamos clase. Y los chicos incentivados de ahí salían e iban al colegio a distancia, y hay muchos que están también en la universidad.* Interview: Cuenca, 14 June 2011.

<sup>203</sup> *Aspiro a seguir yo quiero sacar maestría, doctorado, lo que lo que pueda, o sea, mientras trabaje pero ya. Porque a veces es duro la maestría cuesta muy caro, ya como cubrir los gastos. Quisiera coger como maestría a base de elaboración de proyectos o gestión local o algo así.* Interview: Cuenca, 14 June 2011.

One of Julia's keen ambitions after completing university was to return to Cañar and undertake social programmes in the communities: 'we work with projects a lot in communities. And there are a lot of activities to do there, with women, youngsters, children'.<sup>204</sup> While a number had been carried out in the past, such as micro-credit schemes, agricultural improvements and handicrafts, Julia commented that 'sometimes we don't take advantage of them and we leave them to disappear'.<sup>205</sup> This reflects Julia's awareness of her prior involvement in her community and the limitations present that can restrict development. She said:

At the moment it is talk, talk, talk... they listen but they don't put things into practice and maybe there's another way. Do the theory but also the practice through applying something. I think projects are very important as I can apply them in any area of my profession. In order to assemble a good interesting project proposal, and if it is done well, any institution could accept it, such as the municipality. If they don't have a project they're not doing anything. That's what I think. I did my practical in the military college in Cuenca, and the psychologist said that 'if you don't work with projects, things don't end up well'. If you enter by chance, to give a workshop about sex education, for example, and you don't know the end point you are working towards, you don't have anything to do as an outcome.<sup>206</sup>

It was evident that Julia's higher education, prior experience and knowledge in this field was helping her to identify what her course of action would be after completing university. She clearly wanted to work with local Cañari communities. Julia's preference to return to Cañar, rather than stay in Cuenca, was also influenced by a personal need to have familiar people around: 'in the city, without family, of course you have friends, but it's not the same. There, in exchange, you have family and friends, who go to meetings, are in organisations, everywhere'.<sup>207</sup> In like vein, she

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<sup>204</sup> ... *supongamos en las comunidades más trabajamos con proyectos y hay muchas actividades que hacer allá, ¿no? Con las mujeres, con los jóvenes, con los niños.* Interview: Cuenca, 14 June 2011.

<sup>205</sup> ... *a veces no aprovechan, no aprovechamos, y dejamos perder...* Interview: Cuenca, 14 June 2011.

<sup>206</sup> ... *ahorita es charlas, charlas, charlas. Y casi que a veces escuchan pero no ponen en práctica, y tal vez alguna otra manera. Que baiga teoría pero que baiga práctica, alguna cosa, aplicar. Pienso eso. Yo creo que proyectos son muy muy importante, porque puedo aplicar en cualquier ámbito de mi profesión. O sea, para armar una propuesta, un proyecto bien hecho, interesante, y si es que está bien hecha, pueden aceptar en cualquier institución. Incluso en municipio social, todos las instituciones trabajan con proyecto digamos. Si es que no tienen proyecto creo que no están en nada. Eso creo. Que incluso yo hice práctica en colegio militar, están aquí en Cuenca, y la psicóloga decía que, 'si es que no trabajas con proyectos, no te salen bien las cosas'. Si es que entras al azar, que va a ser un taller de yo qué sé de educación sexual, y no tienes un fin a donde llegar, no tienes nada de hacer un resultado, creo.* Interview: Cuenca, 14 June 2011.

<sup>207</sup> ... *en la ciudad, o sea sin familia, claro que se tiene amigos que se ve pero no es lo mismo. Allá en cambio, creo que hay familiares o sea hay amigos, que están en las reuniones, en las organizaciones, hay en todos...* Interview: Cuenca, 14 June 2011

considered the following to be outcomes for indigenous women with formal education who return to their communities:

They consider us as having a little more knowledge, so we are teaching them literacy. They take us into account more, preparing us more, always calling to say that there is a meeting, that we should go and participate, that there's a workshop with an organisation and that we should go...<sup>208</sup>

Therefore, educated women are being given responsibility, respect and encouragement inside villages. Despite the description Julia gave earlier over some community member's perception of university, clearly becoming degree-level educated is considered significant. Julia also differentiated the role of women in communities in the past, with today:

... in comparison with before when wives never left the house because the husband was out and the woman couldn't be, now there's active participation in different organisations. Now, we women take up positions in public and private institutions. For indigenous women, that is a great advancement, especially when husbands wouldn't allow it previously... Women's voice did not count much in organisations previously, but through that women now fight... today, women work, we have a voice and vote.<sup>209</sup>

I asked her why she thought things had changed so much:

... the root of this is that we have rights, we can study, we can be someone in life, we can occupy positions similar to *mestizos*. Before, there was so much discrimination from *mestizos*, and I think through this, communities found strength, the leaders encouraged people, and now our rights exist. Maybe they existed before, we just didn't know it because they weren't respected. Now they're respected and at least we can defend ourselves.<sup>210</sup>

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<sup>208</sup> ... nos consideran como tener un poquito más de conocimiento de lo que es escritura y lectura estamos preparándolos. Nos toman en cuenta un poquito más, que están preparándonos, siempre están llamando mira aquí hay una reunión vengan participen, tenemos talleres que viene tal institución pero vengan ustedes... Interview: Cuenca, 14 June 2011.

<sup>209</sup> ... de participar ya activamente en diferentes organizaciones, a comparación de antes que que no salían las esposas de la casa porque el varón era de afuera y la mujer no. Al menos ahora las mujeres ocupamos puestos en cualquier institución, puede ser pública, privada. Y hay una mujer indígena y eso creo que es un gran alcance, a comparación de antes ya es que ni siquiera salían de la casa, porque le los maridos no le permitía... La voz de la mujer no contaba mucho en las organizaciones, pero a raíz de eso también hay mujeres que luchan... ya hay mujeres que trabajan y también en las reuniones, tenemos voz y voto. Interview: Cuenca, 14 June 2011.

<sup>210</sup> ... creo que a raíz de eso a surgido eso de que, que nosotras también tenemos derecho, que podemos estudiar, que podemos ser alguien en la vida, que podemos estar ocupando puestos al igual que los *mestizos*. Porque antes también había la discriminación que son los *mestizos* y, creo que en ese aspecto creo que ya fuerza ya quizás a raíz de las comunidades también los dirigentes que les incentivan, de los derechos que ya existen. Quizás antes, por no saber que a pesar de que haya existido pero no se respetaba. Claro que ahorita se respeta sus derechos y al menos ya podemos defendernos. Interview: Cuenca, 14 June 2011.



Julia consequently links the change in women's status to the organisational processes that have taken place within the indigenous organisations and movement in Ecuador towards establishing indigenous rights as peoples. Women have gained in public and private spaces due to a collective process of empowerment. On the other hand, Julia also noted that there was significant competition between indigenous people, especially those who were better educated:

There is a group of educated people, who are already practising professionals, who, let's suppose, want to be in all the positions; they want to occupy the highest post possible. In this regard, those like me, who have educated themselves, have been arguing with the others, in that they don't provide opportunities, that it isn't fair and that they want to continue to be first. I think that in this respect, there is competition, because the others think that those recently educated want to take the position away from them, and so they try to get even further educated.<sup>211</sup>

This is interesting, as it demonstrates the potential conflicts that can arise amongst educated groups; it becomes more about individual success and prestige than working towards the benefit of the collective via education. In turn, I asked how she understood the term '*empoderamiento*'. Pausing for a few seconds before responding, she thoughtfully said:

Hmm, empowerment for me is "to take hold of". I mean it is to take hold of maybe, [pause] I mean, it depends on the situation, the position I am in. To put yourself out. I don't know if there is a difference between saying, "I want to empower myself of something", or saying, "I have authority". I mean, I have always found a clash with people of authority, I don't like it. Maybe there is a difference between authority and empowering myself of something. I don't know. Is there a difference?<sup>212</sup>

Clearly Julia found it difficult to answer my question, demonstrating a lack of understanding of the word and concept. This is particularly visible as she turned the question back to me. Prior to doing so, she identified empowerment as either having

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<sup>211</sup> Hay un grupo de gente que se ha preparado desde de tiempo, o sea son personas que ya tienen su profesión, están ejerciendo ellos. Supongamos quieren estar en todos los puestos que salga y siempre están así, o sea siempre quieren ocupar el puesto más alto ellos. Y quizás en ese aspecto hemos venido peleando, de que no es justo, o sea, de que las personas que hemos preparado, que están preparándose, están preparados que nos les den chance a ellos y que sigan, quieren ser ellos en la primera. Creo que ese aspecto, hay competencias por eso, que a veces ellos piensan que uno está estudiando es para quitar el puesto, y ellos también tratan de ir preparándose más todo pero, o sea, quizás en la competencia entre indígenas. Interview: Cuenca, 14 June 2011.

<sup>212</sup> Empoderamiento. Hmm, realmente, para mí creo que empoderamiento es "coger". O sea "coger", quizá. O sea depende, depende de situación, en que posición estoy. Póngase. No sé si es que hay diferencia decir "quiero empoderarme de algo" o al contrario decir "soy autoritaria". O sea, yo siempre he venido teniendo con las personas que son autoritarias o sea, hay choque, no me gusta. Tal vez haya diferencia entre autoritaria y empoderarme de alguna cosa. No sé ¿Hay diferencia de eso? Interview: Cuenca, 14 June 2011.

authority (*power over*), or to “take hold of something” to become empowered. However, she was not explicit in what she meant here either. What is the “something”? As I wanted an organic response, I did not push Julia to provide further interpretation. Nevertheless, it can be suggested that Julia is making a distinction here between what it means to “take an opportunity” and to be “power-hungry”.

While Julia appears an independent, motivated, ambitious, and hardworking individual, seeking to work with and alongside others in her career, she likely does not associate herself as being an ‘empowered’ woman. Julia appears to understand the notion of “power” to have negative connotations. The statement above that she did not like authority, as a possible interpretation of ‘empowerment’, is supported by the fact that she enjoys working with others and understanding them. This is reflected in her drive towards psychology, in which she prefers not to be the person to hold control and power over someone, but to provide support to them instead. Thus, for Julia, it can be said that she seeks to find *power with* and *power to*, via her process of establishing *power within*, particularly by becoming higher-level educated. The difference is, she is humbly working towards these powers of empowerment without cognitively realising it. For her, the notion of empowerment is irrelevant. She is just doing it.

### ***Sisa***

Sisa was born in 1984. She is the eldest of five, with three younger sisters and a brother. Her family live in a small isolated hamlet in the countryside.<sup>213</sup> Sisa recounted some of her childhood memories, explaining how she had to walk an hour to get to school, which began at 7.30 am and finished at 12.30 pm. At times she was left to make lunch, as her mother often went to work as a fruit seller on the coast, while her father worked in construction. On occasion, Sisa would accompany her mother to the coast, while at other times she would go alone, as young as ten years old. Around 14-15 years old Sisa went more frequently. On Saturdays in

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<sup>213</sup> Sisa explained that, today, her small village consists of around 35 to 40 people, predominately made up of women due to the migration phenomenon. Those born between 1984 and 1988 she believed to be mainly female, whereas those born around 1992/93 were male. She attributes this to the custom of young married women moving to live in their spouse’s community after marriage.

particular, Sisa's sister sometimes accompanied her, meaning Sisa was responsible for her sibling during the trip. They would leave at 3 a.m., arriving on the coast around 8 a.m. to begin selling vegetables and *mote*.

It became clear as Sisa talked that her family had low economic resources. She told me that as a teenager she never went to dances. When her friends asked her why she did not go, she told them that 'my parents don't have economic possibilities, so I have to go [to the coast] in order to improve the family economy'.<sup>214</sup> The way Sisa described her work suggested that she did not enjoy it - she had to get up early, travel at night by an open-topped truck rather than bus, often in windy and rainy conditions. When she finally stopped travelling to the coast, she said: 'I don't regret stopping that work because, of course, it wasn't work. It was so cold, and sometimes trade was bad'.<sup>215</sup> Reflecting on this as "not work", due to the harsh conditions she endured through it, Sisa noted how this experience in her childhood particularly came to mind, as she often felt "sad" about the situation. However, she reminded herself that she was doing it to help support herself and her siblings. In this light, Sisa said it was 'an attempt to improve life', reinforcing the issue of scarce family resources.<sup>216</sup> As a substitute to this work, in her early twenties Sisa began selling handicrafts and rented a stall in town, which later evolved into a small *pollera* business.

Bearing the above in mind, Sisa's childhood narrative demonstrates that she played an important role in her family's subsistent economy from a young age. As an adolescent, Sisa was given significant responsibility, which required her to become independent, mature and aware of her surroundings and potential risks very quickly. It also appears to have impacted on her socialisation with peers. She was close to her family, yet the description of her time at university indicated loneliness, especially because she encountered both social and intellectual difficulties in transitioning from college to higher education. While studying at college, Sisa was able to live at home.

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<sup>214</sup> ... *mis pápis no son de posibilidad económica. Para mejorar la economía familiar. Entonces yo tengo que irme.* Interview: Cuenca, 13 June 2011.

<sup>215</sup> *No, no me arrepiento de haber dejado ese trabajo porque, claro, o sea, no era trabajo. Hacia tanto frio y a veces no iba bien el negocio.* Interview: Cuenca, DATE

<sup>216</sup> ... *eso es mas que viene en mente... mirado asi es triste, pero a veces digo, o sea, eso era poder educarnos tambien, tambien para poder vestir, alimentar... entonces trata de mejorar la vida.* Interview: Cuenca, 13 June 2011.

Whereas when she went to university, she had to relocate to the city and acclimatise to the ‘more contaminated’ urban environment:

When you’re at home it’s different. You arrive home and your family is there. But when you live alone, you don’t meet anyone. You return to your room, you’re alone... So in this sense it was a little hard for me, studying in the city, learning how to live alone, defending yourself...<sup>217</sup>

Intellectually, Sisa stated that she found the university workload a challenge initially, particularly because college was less intense, with fewer subjects: ‘... at university you need more time for study, more dedication... I used to study secretarial administration, so I didn’t have all the mathematical bases that I needed to study business administration...’.<sup>218</sup> Nevertheless, Sisa managed to overcome these struggles as she graduated successfully. After telling me of her challenges, she commented, ‘you just have to try to keep moving forward’.<sup>219</sup> It is therefore evident that Sisa was a motivated and determined character, particularly as she was not willing to give up despite the difficulties she encountered.

In turn, I asked Sisa what inspired her to go to university. She explained that her college course had touched on the topic of business administration and that she had enjoyed this subject due to her dream of having her own enterprise. This demonstrates two important points. Firstly, Sisa had aspirations and the capacity to create goals for her life at an early age, which was formed by her educational experience. Secondly, it shows how formal education at a secondary level in Cañar can provide an environment for young women to begin to form an idea of what they might want to do in the future, and lead to an awareness of higher education choices and potential outcomes.

Sisa highlighted that much of her decision to go to university and study this subject was also influenced by her college teacher:

... there was a teacher that always told us that the focus of administration is on creating businesses, to create products and services and satisfy the needs

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<sup>217</sup> ... uno cuando está en la casa es diferente. Uno al llegar a casa y ya están los papás y los hermanos, todo eso. Mientras cuando uno viene a vivir solita ya no encuentra a nadie, o sea, una regresa al cuarto, está sola... Entonces, en ese sentido sí, sí me hizo un poco duro, o sea, estudiar en la ciudad, aprender a vivir solita, defenderse sola... otra cosa es que la ciudad es más contaminada, todo eso, entonces en el campo es al contrario. Interview: Cuenca, 13 June 2011.

<sup>218</sup> ...primero, en el colegio uno se tiene pocas materias, y segundo, esas materias no son tan amplias como uno ve en universidad. Entonces en la universidad se requiere más horas de estudio, más dedicación. Sí fue un poco complicado porque yo seguía secretariado y, o sea, no tenía muchas bases para matemáticas porque administración de empresas requiere de matemáticas. Interview: Cuenca, 13 June 2011.

<sup>219</sup> ... entonces prácticamente uno tiene que tratar de salir adelante... Interview: Cuenca, 13 June 2011.

of other people. That teacher placed a lot in me. He motivated us, saying “this course is good for these reasons”. I also read a book about administration. So all that motivated me to go to university.<sup>220</sup>

Sisa also stated that this course was less costly than others, which was another factor in her decision-making process. Given her family’s economic situation, this was an important issue. I therefore also wished to know what support Sisa had received over her decision to study at university from her parents. Sisa’s father had completed his college education in his mid-twenties, after accessing an adult literacy programme. Sisa’s mother was illiterate, carrying out domestic and agricultural work. Sisa said:

They have supported me. My mother more than anything said, “you have to go and study, you have to “move forward”, you can’t miss classes”. My mother was the one in support of this career choice as my father wanted me to study economics.<sup>221</sup>

Sisa explained that, as a consequence of her illiteracy, her mother became aware of the value of education through observation:

I think the mentality of my parent’s generation changed due to experience... If she [mother] had been able to read and write, she could have helped us more, and developed her skills in the environments that she spent time in, etc.... the change in attitude is because you can improve the family economy through studying. That is what my mother saw. For example, other women had gone to college, to university, and she saw this. If she too had studied, she would have been the same as those other people who improved the family economy via education.<sup>222</sup>

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<sup>220</sup> ... es por eso, es que más me gustó esta carrera. Mi sueño es tener mi propia empresa. Entonces, eso, eso es lo que a mí me motivó [to go to university]. Siempre me gustó esa carrera. Entonces desde que estaba en el colegio, porque había un profesor que siempre nos decía que administración es esto, es más o menos enfocado a crear empresas, a pro--, a crear productos, a crear servicios y así para satisfacer la necesidad de las personas. Me metió bastante..., o sea, nos motivaba, prácticamente a todo el curso porque decía: “esta carrera es buena por estas razones.” También había leído ese libro sobre administración que trataba. Entonces por eso es que me motivó. Interview: Cuenca, 13 June 2011.

<sup>221</sup> ... vuelta en casa mía no, sí, sí me apoyaban. O sea, o sea sí me han mencionado, mi mami más que nada sí me ha mencionado, ‘o sea, tienes que ir a estudiar, tienes que “seguir”, no tienes que faltar a clases.’ Entonces, mi mami es la única persona para que siguiera esa carrera porque mi papá quería que estudiara economía. Interview: Cuenca, 13 June 2011.

<sup>222</sup> Yo creo que es que lo que cambió la mentalidad de la generación de mis padres era que use la experiencia también. Mi mami, ella no sabe leer ni escribir pero no me, es decir, si ella supiera leer y escribir, o sea, ella nos podía ayudar más a nosotros y también de desenvolverse así en el, en el, en el entorno en donde ella pasa y todo eso. Entonces, lo que sí puede, o sea, por ejemplo, la mentalidad de que, que el cambio de mentalidad de ellos también es que, es que se puede mejorar la economía familiar estudiando. Entonces, eso veía ella, mi mami. Por ejemplo, habían otras personas también, que las mujeres también estudiaban iban a los colegios, a la universidad. Entonces, entonces ella..., o sea, ella veía eso así, porque si ella también estudiaba hubiera sido igual como esas otras personas que mejoran su economía familiar por medio de la educación. Interview: Cuenca, 13 June 2011.

Through her mother's increased consciousness of the difference an education could make, particularly vis-à-vis family economics, she understood the potential positive outcomes. However, when Sisa's parents separated when she was in her second year, it put her mother and Sisa in a difficult position financially:

My mother was left with the responsibility of five children when my father left... My mother has been sick for nearly two years with a heart problem. So, as an elder daughter you can do nothing more but try to be both mother and father at home... it is awful. I mean, I nearly quit university, as my mother told me, 'I don't have any money and I want you to stop because I cannot help you'. So then I had to look for alternative means to continue forward. At the weekends she'd tell me not to leave and to stay at home. So I said I would look for a way to keep studying.<sup>223</sup>

This domestic situation placed Sisa in a contradictory position. On the one hand, she wanted to be available to help her mother, but this would mean stopping university. On the other hand, she was also at university because it could benefit her family in the long-term, and thus she did not want to give up. Equally, the pressure to succeed had in turn suddenly increased, but at what cost? Sisa told me:

It's a situation that hurts you a lot as a daughter. It had an enormous impact on both my siblings and I. I thought about it happening to me, later, or to one of my sisters. So it is a very serious problem, according to me. It is a situation in which, although you reach goals, you are unhappy.<sup>224</sup>

Here, Sisa indicated that it is possible to meet material goals despite emotional trauma, recognising that although she had met her objective, she was not emotionally satisfied due to external domestic reasons. It was during this difficult time that Sisa came to know about Judy's scholarship programme. She was introduced to her through someone at the university. Sisa called Judy and explained her domestic situation. Judy went to visit the family, culminating in Sisa's mother's

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<sup>223</sup> ... No sé, a mi madre prácticamente se quedó la responsabilidad de cinco hijos cuando mi papá se fue... O sea, por ejemplo mi mami ahorita mi mami hace ya, está ya va un año, ya va para dos años y, y está enferma. Ella tiene un problema del corazón. Y entonces uno, uno, más que todo, como una hija mayor es que uno no más tiene que hacer, tratar de ser papá y mamá en la casa... Es fatal. O sea, incluso yo me iba a retirar de la universidad. Y entonces, incluso mi mami dijo que "yo ya, ya no tengo de dónde darte y yo quiero que tú te retires de la, yo quiero que retires de la universidad porque yo no puedo, no voy a poder ayudarte." Entonces, tenía que, o sea, buscar maneras para poder salir adelante porque incluso un fin de semana yo me voy a la casa y ahí ya mi mamá me dijo: "ya no te vayas, quédate aquí." yo dije: "yo voy a buscar formas para salir de aquí para poder estudiar". Interview: Cuenca, 13 June 2011.

<sup>224</sup> Es una situación que duele bastante así como hija hace un impacto muy grande para mí y también creo que para mis hermanos. Entonces, ese es un problema bastante grave y entonces, según para mí, personalmente, o sea, pienso que es como si a mí me es, a mí me pasara eso después o a una de mis hermanas. Entonces, es, es una situación que, por lo más que uno personalmente alcance metas, uno no se siente feliz. Interview: Cuenca, 13 June 2011.

agreement that Sisa could continue her studies with Judy's support. As such, Sisa was able to continue and finish university. She said, 'of all the grandchildren on either side of my parents, I am the first to finish university. So my family is proud of me. 'Thank god I have been able to finish my course'.<sup>225</sup> Out of her immediate family, she is the only one to go to university so far.<sup>226</sup> Sisa told me she felt "happy" to have graduated but was also concerned, as she could not find a job. She had looked in both Cuenca and Cañar, at private and public institutions, banks and cooperatives. If she could not find a paid job, then Sisa planned to build her *pollera* business in her hometown. However, she was worried, as she needed to pay back a loan taken out to start it. It seemed her motivation to work was more complex than simply providing for her family.

Sisa explained that she felt her identity as an indigenous woman, wearing indigenous clothing, had impacted her ability to find work. She attributed the fact that she was required to attach a photograph to job applications as being discriminated against: '...as they oblige you to wear trousers or a suit, I think that's why I haven't managed to work in a business. It is discrimination. I don't believe you can force someone to change the way they dress'.<sup>227</sup> While discrimination in the work place, based on physical appearance and ethnicity, could be considered as a factor of disempowerment, Sisa demonstrated that she was self-confident and comfortable with her embodied ethnicity through her use of dress. She also showed an awareness of her rights, and was steadfast in asserting them. This latter point was also expressed through an account Sisa gave of an argument with her third year lecturer, which also demonstrated her tenacity. She had always worn her *sombrero* to class, unless it was physical education. One day, the teacher arrived and motioned to her to remove her hat. Asking what was wrong, the teacher told Sisa to remove her *sombrero*. She explained:

We argued for an hour. Because he asked why I didn't remove it, and said that I should... I told him that I didn't have to take it off. I told him that it

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<sup>225</sup> ... de todas la nietas soy la primera que terminó la universidad, tanto por parte de mi mamá como de mi papá. Entonces, sí, sí mi, o sea, mi familia también se siente orgullosa por mí. Gracias a dios sí he podido concluir mi carrera. Interview: Cuenca, 13 June 2011.

<sup>226</sup> Sisa had several cousins studying medicine and architecture at university at the time of interview.

<sup>227</sup> Entonces como que a uno le obligan que tiene que ponerse pantalón o tiene que ponerse terno... entonces, y justamente fue por eso que no entré a trabajar en una empresa. Entonces es una discriminación y creo que no se puede obligar a cambiarla forma de vestir de las personas. Interview: Cuenca, 13 June 2011.

was like him coming to work with a suit and a tie, and me asking him to remove his tie. I didn't take it off...<sup>228</sup>

After being interviewed, Sisa became director of a Credit Union in her town. This is a significant achievement, as she competed for the post alongside non-indigenous applicants. In addition to her degree, it seemed that her identity as a native Quichua speaker was significant in this appointment. She can reach a wider proportion of the population to become cooperative members through her language and communication capabilities via her ethnicity.<sup>229</sup> In contrast with previous attempts at finding a job, Sisa's physical appearance and ethnic identity was an asset in acquiring this position. Likewise, although Sisa encountered hardships during higher education, the outcome of becoming a professional has been noteworthy. This is not only from an economic perspective through gaining employment, 'which will better the family economic situation', but also from a psychological one.<sup>230</sup> She appears to feel valued by her family for her accomplishment, and felt that others gave her more consideration and respect, particularly as she had 'excelled through her own sacrifice'.<sup>231</sup> As such, Sisa had not only proved herself, but also seemed confident and aware of her capabilities in order to develop other aspects of her life. This is particularly evident in relation to her involvement within the community:

As part of the community I help and contribute to meetings. Now, I am not glued to my studies and I can participate. I help in decision-making, suggesting ideas and how something might be carried out to improve an issue... Given my degree is in business administration, you can contribute something to the community in looking for problems and how to overcome them... The current example is the water system, which we meet to talk about at the end of every month. I am thinking about suggesting that we rebuild the system, as it is about fifteen years old. That's my personal idea, which no one knows yet... we are in the dry season at the moment, meaning that it is easier to carry out work, as the rain will not affect us as much. I'm sure they will agree with my idea, or at least be positive because it is for the

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<sup>228</sup> *Pasamos de discusión una hora. Porque decía que, por qué no saco el sombrero, que debo sacar el sombrero, que tanta cosa. Yo le decía "yo no tengo que sacar mi sombrero". Digo, "es como si usted me dijera sáquese, como si yo le dijera a usted saque, si usted viene con terno y viene con corbata, es como si yo le dijera sáquese la corbata."* Yo no saqué nada. No, no saqué. Interview: Cuenca, 13 June 2011.

<sup>229</sup> Email communication with Judy, 11 November 2013.

<sup>230</sup> *Yo veo como si todo, o sea, va a mejorar, la situación económica de la familia.* Interview: Cuenca, 13 June 2011.

<sup>231</sup> *Entonces, como que tienen más consideración y tienen más respeto, como que dicen, bueno, no sé, "se superó por su propio sacrificio" y todo eso.* Interview: Cuenca, 13 June 2011.



well-being of everyone; it isn't just for me or my family. But it is for the whole community.<sup>232</sup>

As a result of her degree, Sisa is able to make a practical contribution to improving her community's welfare, as she has expanded her problem-solving skills and cognitive processes at university, which can be used to help benefit the collective.

Towards the end of the interview I asked Sisa about the word '*empoderamiento*'. For her it meant '*adueñarse de algo*' or 'to possess or take control of something'. In relation to women she said she thought the word meant 'taking control of the activities that you carry out or, it could be, changing the mentality of a woman by telling them "you shouldn't do that"'.<sup>233</sup> In turn, "power" meant 'power to do something, power to make decisions on your own, without anyone's help, or to convince others of an idea that you have'. I found this definition interesting, and so asked if she felt she had this power: 'not really, because for example, within an organisation, you don't have much power to convince and change the mentality of all the members'. Thus she was cognisant that she could not always generate *power with*, despite having the *power to* and *power within* her to help enable change. I did, however, get the impression that Sisa had *power to* make decisions independently of others. This was evidenced, for example, by her ability to apply to various employment positions of her own choosing, or become involved in her community on a more political level. She has, nonetheless, been restricted on the location of employment due to the health of her mother and additional domestic responsibilities, which are external constraints that influence some of Sisa's decisions and paths of action.

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<sup>232</sup> *Como parte de la comunidad yo apporto así en las reuniones, en ayudo. O sea, ya no estoy así tan, tan apegada a los estudios, nada, entonces yo ya participo en las reuniones. O sea, ayudo en la toma de decisiones todo entonces. Y yo también sugiero, o sea, digo, "hagamos de esta manera para mejorar esto"... más que todo, como mi carrera es de administración de empresas, uno sí puede aportar algo en buscar problemas que hay en la comunidad, y qué hacer para poder salir de eso... Por ejemplo ahorita en el sistema de agua que tenemos, es justamente la reunión hacemos todos los fines de meses. Y entonces, estoy pensando en decir que, o sea, mejorar el sistema de agua porque tiene construcción de unos los quince, dieciséis años. Entonces, hacer una reestructuración de eso todo. Entonces, o sea, es mi idea personal. Claro que todavía nadie sabe... Como ahorita estamos en temporada del verano, entonces, en verano ya es más, más conveniente realizar trabajos comunitarios porque se puede salir, o sea, no afecta mucho las aguas para realizar trabajos. Entonces, yo estoy segura que ellos van a ser, que van a estar de acuerdo con mi idea que tengo. Entonces pienso, o sea, yo personalmente estoy pensando eso. Entonces espero que sea positivo. Porque igual, el bienestar es para todos, no es para mí, no es solo para mí tampoco, solo para mi familia. Sino más bien es para toda la comunidad.* Interview: Cuenca, 13 June 2011.

<sup>233</sup> *Es como que adueñarse de las actividades que hace uno o cómo cambiaron, o sea, como decirle a uno "no debes hacer eso", o sea, como cambiar la mentalidad de una mujer, puede ser.* Interview: Cuenca, 13 June 2011.

## **Giovanna**

Giovanna was born in 1980. She is the second child of eight, and the eldest daughter. She has five brothers and two sisters.<sup>234</sup> Her father worked on the coast for much of Giovanna's childhood and adolescent years, working in factories in Guayaquil, returning to Cañar every eight to fifteen days. Giovanna's mother, Tania, told me 'I was at home with my children, with my animals. I did everything, was mother and father, to my kids'.<sup>235</sup> Tania, therefore, was the primary parental figure in her children's childhood. In turn, it appeared that Giovanna was one of her mother's foundations of support, saying that as the second born, 'the responsibility to help my mother with them [her siblings] fell to me'.<sup>236</sup>

At the same time, Giovanna told me that she was 'a very good student at school...and loved by the teachers'.<sup>237</sup> As a teenager she completed her *bachillerato* in agriculture. During Giovanna's time at college, in 1998, her father decided to migrate to the USA, when coastal factories began to close and work declined. Giovanna explained:

My father said, "I have eight children, and how can I give them an education?"... My parents always believed that their children had to study, be a professional. That has always been their desire. So that was one of the fundamental reasons why my father migrated... Its 2011 and he [her father] is still there in the USA... So since then [1998] until now we've been the responsibility of my mother, and I as the older sister at home with my siblings. My older brother and younger brother are in the United States. They all live together.<sup>238</sup>

As part of this narrative Giovanna reflected on the continual presence of her mother in her life given her father's absence, in addition to the impact of migration on her family:

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<sup>234</sup> Giovanna is not married nor has children.

<sup>235</sup>... *él vivía allá en la costa, igual yo así con mis hijos en la casa, con mis animales todo. Yo, yo hice de todo siempre, padre y madre, para mis hijos.* Interview: Tania, Cañar, 9 July 2011.

<sup>236</sup> ... *me tocó la responsabilidad de ayudar a mi mamá con ellos.* Interview: Cuenca, 27 May 2011.

<sup>237</sup> Fui muy buena estudiante en la escuela... fui muy querido de los profesores. Interview: Cuenca, 27 May 2011

<sup>238</sup> *Mi papi decía, yo tengo ocho hijos y, y cómo les doy la educación... siempre en la mente de mi papá y mi mamá ha estado de que nosotros los hijos tenemos que estudiar, ser profesionales y eso ha sido el anhelo de ellos siempre. Entonces una de las razones fundamentales de que se ha ido mi papá fue eso... Estamos en el 2011 y todavía sigue mi papá en los Estados Unidos... Entonces, bueno, ha habido esa, mi mami todavía sigue con nosotros acá, no se ha ido. Entonces nosotros estamos desde esa época, desde ese año hasta ahora como que solo bajo la tutela de mi mamá, y, y yo como la hermana mayor en la casa con mis otros hermanos. Yo tengo mi hermano mayor que está también en Estados Unidos. El que me sigue a mí también es varón y está en Estados Unidos. Viven todos juntos.* Interview: Cuenca, 27 May 2011.

I can say that I am blessed to still have my mother with us, because in some cases both parents have gone, i.e. the fundamental pillars of a home. When my father left, the impact was huge. He was one of the first to leave Cañar. So we were not used to the idea of familial separation... Later my two brothers left. I definitively think it is a wound that you think you will never overcome... I had one year left of college and my father wasn't here. A little before finishing my older brother left. They are things that suddenly mark you and leave a thorn behind.<sup>239</sup>

While not specifically describing the impact that her father and brothers' migration had on her education at that point, Giovanna said that she failed in her second and third year college studies due to 'certain inconveniences in her life at that time'.<sup>240</sup> She opined: 'it was really hard, for us kids, for the family, for my grandmother, for everyone. I remember phone calls where we all cried, every time a sea of tears. After a while you grow used to it'.<sup>241</sup> Despite the emotional trauma resulting from this situation, Giovanna successfully attended university and graduated in biochemistry. She recognised the support received from her parents in relation to this:

The typical saying that my parents had, for example, was, "we don't want our children to suffer like we suffered. We want better days for them, we want better things for them". So then, they saw that education was good and it was my family's priority... Support is fundamental, what your parents want for you, that is very important... it is dependent 100 per cent on the family and parents.<sup>242</sup>

This was reinforced by Tania, who said 'everything comes from within the family.

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<sup>239</sup> ...podré decir que tengo la bendición de dios de todavía tener a mi mamá con nosotros, porque algunos se han ido papá y mamá, o sea se han ido todos los dos pilares fundamentales de la casa. Cuando primero se fue mi papá, el impacto fue grande, o sea mi papá es uno casi de los primeros que se ha ido de Cañar. Entonces todavía no estábamos hechos a la idea, y pienso que nunca nos hacemos a la idea de la separación de un familiar tan cercano... Después ya se fueron mis otros dos hermanos también, o sea la cosa es dura. Definitivamente pienso que es un, un golpe que tú a pesar de que pasen los años no logras superar... . A mí me faltaba un año para terminar el colegio, no estaba mi papá. Y ya un poco antes de yo culminar también se fue mi hermano mayor. Entonces son cosas que de pronto te marcan y ahí se te queda la espina. Interview: Giovanna, Cuenca, 27 May 2011.

<sup>240</sup> ... en el colegio fallé un poco en mis estudios. En segundo y tercer año, en la época de segundo y tercero fueron medio flojas para mí. Flojas por ciertos inconvenientes que tuve en esa época de la adolescencia. Interview: Cuenca, 27 May 2011.

<sup>241</sup> Fue muy duro, realmente fue muy duro para nosotros los hijos, para los familiares, para mi abuelita, fue duro para todos, para todos. Hasta recuerdo que todas las tar--recuerdo hasta tres o cuatro años atrás todas las llamadas absolutamente todas las llamadas llorábamos, llorábamos todos, y era así todas las veces un mar de llantos, así las llamadas eran siempre así. Pero hasta que tú de a poco te vas acostumbrando. Interview: Cuenca, 27 May 2011.

<sup>242</sup> Ellos, el típico dicho que tienen por ejemplo es: 'No queremos que nuestros hijos sean, y que sufran, lo que nosotros hemos sufrido. Entonces queremos mejores días para ellos, queremos mejores cosas para ellos'. Entre eso vieron que la educación era buena, entonces la prioridad en mi familia fue la educación... Fundamental el apoyo, lo que tus padres quieren para ti, eso es muy importante... en la familia y en los papas, depende absolutamente casi en el 100 por ciento. Interview: Cañar, 27 May 2011.

Depending on the family, when the family is supportive. If they aren't, there is nothing'.<sup>243</sup> Tania commented that, as she and her husband were providing their children with the opportunity to become educated, especially at the emotional cost of migratory processes: 'education is worth a lot. Now, even to be a housewife, if you haven't studied there is nothing. The land will not last forever'.<sup>244</sup>

When I asked Tania about how she felt when Giovanna told her she wanted to go to university, she replied: 'I told her she had to continue until she had her degree. I have always said that she needs to study; to all of them I say you have to be something in life. Get a degree in order to be something'.<sup>245</sup> Tania's statements here conclusively suggest that she believes education is the root to creating a prosperous life, besides the need to value education. Tania was born during the hacienda period and stayed in school until second grade, later completing her primary education as an adult via a literacy programme and long distance learning. She did not have paid employment but worked in agriculture. Tania in particular did not want her children to have the same experience of education, or lack of, as she did. In Giovanna's case, therefore, it was a combination of her father's migrant remittances and her mother's emotional encouragement that have been key motivators in her pursuance of higher education.

Giovanna explained the process she went through in order to choose her degree course. Firstly, when at school, her future goal was on education and teaching girls, meaning that at a young age Giovanna was beginning to envision a path for her life. But, as Giovanna said, 'you grow up and your ideas and aspirations change'.<sup>246</sup> Giovanna was able to reflect back, and see how increased maturity and awareness can influence what you want from life. Finishing college, however, Giovanna was confused as to what to do: 'my parents especially wanted me to study law or medicine, either one of those, as they say "that course will be reliable economically

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<sup>243</sup> ... *todo viene de adentro de la familia. Según la familia, cuando la familia apoya. Si no apoyan, no hay nada.* Interview: Cuenca, 27 May 2011.

<sup>244</sup> ...*la educación vale bastante vale. Ahora basta para ser ama de casa, si no has estudiado, no hay nada. Y las tierras también ya va a terminarse de trabajar.* Interview: Cañar, 9 July 2011.

<sup>245</sup>... *le he dicho tiene que seguir. Tiene que seguir hasta que sea ya--hasta que tenga su, ya su título bueno, sí. Yo siempre he dicho tiene que estudiar y todo, a todos mismo digo tiene que ser algo en la vida. Tiene que sacarse título. Su cartoncito ya para ser algo.* Interview: Cañar, 9 July 2011.

<sup>246</sup> *Pero tú vas creciendo creciendo y vas cambiando de ideas y de gustos también.* Interview: Cuenca, 27 May 2011.

in the future”<sup>247</sup>. Giovanna rationalised why she did not want to study either of those subjects: a) she had not been good at, nor liked, theory, so law was not for her; b) she was scared of going to hospital, so medicine was not right either. Her confusion lay in the fact that, ‘at that time you had to study what your parents wanted and please them, right? So I decided to have someone assist me’.<sup>248</sup> A teacher explained what biochemistry was about and the potential future opportunities in the profession: ‘have a pharmacy, sell medicines. I thought, “Sounds good. Cool, I’ll go for biochemistry, but only because someone told me that”’. He painted the panorama, nothing more. “You’ll do OK financially”, he said’.<sup>249</sup> Just as in the case of Sisa and Julia, Giovanna chose her degree course based upon the opinion and advice of someone else. Further, it is noted that Giovanna was not forced by her parents into studying what they wanted, meaning she still had agency and autonomy in selecting the subject.

Having enrolled in biochemistry, Giovanna explained how the course content was nothing like she imagined; it involved a lot of algebra, physics, geometry, etc. She did not struggle with these subjects as she had covered them in college, demonstrating the grounding that her prior formal education had given her to be successful at a higher level. Yet she was surprised not to study anything related to pharmaceuticals or illnesses, and became perplexed about the course content, noting:

It wasn’t until the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> cycle that you began to study what you wanted. Then, yes, I enjoyed it. But, biochemistry isn’t only pharmacy like they paint it, as I’ve never covered it until now. I enjoyed laboratory work, so I focused on that. So, when you don’t have someone to guide you well, you can end up totally lost.<sup>250</sup>

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<sup>247</sup> ... *mis papás en especial querían que estudie derecho o querían que estudie medicina, cualquiera de las dos carreras, por decir ‘esta carrera te va a ser rentable económicamente en el futuro’*. Interview: Cuenca, 27 May 2011.

<sup>248</sup> ... *tenían que estudiar en aquella época a exigencia de tus papás, también tenías que dar gusto a ellos ¿no?* Interview: Cuenca, 27 May 2011.

<sup>249</sup> ... *podías tener una farmacia y dedicarte a la venta de medicamentos”, yo decía ‘me parece lindo. Chévere, me voy a bioquímica’, pero así, porque alguien tan solo me dijo eso y nada más. Entonces, me puso, me pintó el panorama así nada más. ‘Y te va bien económicamente’, ya, listo*. Interview: Cuenca, 27 May 2011.

<sup>250</sup> *Hasta que ya estamos en cuarto-quinto ciclo como que ya un poco te van encaminando a lo que vas a estudiar en sí, pues no. Ya después sí, ya fue algo que me gustó, pero como bioquímica no es solamente la farmacia, como te pintan, y lo último y yo lo que no he hecho hasta ahora es farmacia. No, no he hecho hasta ahora farmacia, más me gusta el área de laboratorio. Entonces más me he enfocado en el área de laboratorio y me encanta laboratorio. Bueno, a veces uno cuando no tiene a alguien quien te oriente bien, esta perdido, realmente está perdido*. Interview: Cuenca, 27 May 2011.

In other words, the information and professional advice given over the choice of biochemistry was not correct, meaning Giovanna was left feeling insecure about what she was studying until towards the end.

When Giovanna started university in 2001, it was still not commonplace for indigenous people to access higher education. She explained how college teachers would often place fear in the students, telling them they would not achieve the grades nor do well at university, as it was difficult. In essence, indigenous students were told they were not intelligent enough to attend a university. This would be a significantly discouraging thing to hear, and Giovanna said she had internalised this concept, often thinking: 'I won't be able to do it'.<sup>251</sup> She also noted that given the small size of Cañar town, everyone knew other people's business: 'there is a saying, "small town, large hellhole"'.<sup>252</sup> Hence, Giovanna did not want anyone to know she had gone to university at first, being terrified that she would fail and have to return to Cañar, embarrassed: 'I feared what people would say – "look, she couldn't hack it and came back"'.<sup>253</sup> Giovanna felt that she had to prove her intellectual abilities to her hometown. Thus, by facing a level of interpersonal disempowerment, Giovanna had to relocate her psychological empowerment. She needed to change the way she perceived herself, and believe that she was capable.

Likewise, once at university, Giovanna encountered the need to prove herself to her lecturers and peers: 'People look at you like a strange insect, saying, "and you, where are you from, where did you crawl out of?"'.<sup>254</sup> Teachers would challenge her initially, asking her to complete equations on the board to test her problem-solving and algebra skills. When Giovanna answered the questions by using a different method to the one taught, she had to explain why. 'But I am arriving at the same answer', she would say.<sup>255</sup> Then the teachers would not hassle her again - Giovanna's prior college education served in establishing and legitimising a presence in the department.

Giovanna was one of only two indigenous students in her faculty, 'so it was

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<sup>251</sup> ... *no voy a poder*. Interview: Cuenca, 27 May 2011.

<sup>252</sup> ... *bueno, "pueblo pequeño, infierno grande" es el dicho*. Interview: Cuenca, 27 May 2011.

<sup>253</sup> ... *me tenía miedo de que la gente me diga; "mira, no pudo, y regresó". Porque esos casos también se han dado*. Interview: Cuenca, 27 May 2011.

<sup>254</sup> ... *te quedan viendo así como un bicho raro ¿no? Y ahora, ¿tú, de dónde eres y de dónde saliste?* Interview: Cuenca, 27 May 2011.

<sup>255</sup> ... *le digo, 'pero estoy llegando a la respuesta, que es la misma'*. Interview: Cuenca, 27 May 2011.

also about breaking the mould'.<sup>256</sup> In order to undo the stereotype, she observed that 'you have to have good self-esteem'.<sup>257</sup> Giovanna recognised that she needed to be confident and self-assured in order to demonstrate her capabilities to others. In the end, she said:

... everyone knew me, as I was the only different one. Teachers and peers spoke to me, understood that I was indigenous, with the same rights to study etc. I never had a major problem. You yourself also have to adapt to the environment. All my university friends were *mestizos*. I got on well with other girls, as I knew algebra well, but I knew little about organic chemistry like they did. So we shared our knowledge.<sup>258</sup>

The power of learning together and from each other thus provided Giovanna with a mechanism to establish social networks within the dominant culture. Moving and acquiring skills to live in the city, however, seemed to be more problematic, especially in Giovanna's first year. She described how she sometimes returned home to Cañar several times a week, as she 'didn't accustom well' to city life for a while:

I had only ever come to Cuenca once with my mother before, to sell potatoes at the market. And even then, we came in a potato truck and never spent time downtown. So I barely knew Cuenca. It's hard coming here, leaving your family.<sup>259</sup>

Giovanna overcame the challenge of loneliness, and at the time of interview, she believed she was the only indigenous graduate and professional in biochemistry. During the latter part of her degree, doors opened up professionally as a consequence of her academic performance and recognition within her faculty. She said she very quickly learnt that 'you have to be responsible and demonstrate to the *mestizos*, who doubt your capabilities, that we are extremely capable, and maybe even

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<sup>256</sup> *Entonces es también un poco romper el esquema ¿no?* Interview: Cuenca, 27 May 2011.

<sup>257</sup> ... *uno tiene que tener la autoestima bien, bien bien puesto*. Interview: Cuenca, 27 May 2011.

<sup>258</sup> *Entonces ya la final ya todos me conocían, como era la única diferente ya entonces todos me identificaban y, y mis compañeros ya hablaban ya entendieron de que, de que yo soy una indígena, igual tengo derechos de estudiar y todo lo demás. Entonces no tuve mayor problema ya. Uno es también adaptarse al medio. Entonces siempre, ya todos mis compañeros de la universidad, hombres y mujeres mestizos, porque yo era la única indígena entonces sí. Y muy bueno porque también ya me empecé a terminar a llevar con las otras chicas porque yo manejaba bastante lo que es el álgebra pero ellas yo no sabía nada de química orgánica. Entonces cada una sabía bastante de química orgánica y yo sabía álgebra y física, pues así nos compartíamos*. Interview: Cuenca, 27 May 2011.

<sup>259</sup> *Yo, antes de venir a la universidad, había venido una sola vez a Cuenca, una sola vez. Y vine con mi mami, porque mi mami se vino a la feria libre, a la venta de papas, una cosecha de papas bastantes papas entonces se vienen a Cuenca a vender. Vinimos en el en el camión que trae las papas, venimos ahí y nos regresamos. Y no es que paseamos por Cuenca, nada. Entonces yo no conocía prácticamente Cuenca. Venir a la universidad y a Cuenca y a vivir aquí era duro, y dejar a la familia, a la mamá, a los hermanos también duro*. Interview: Cuenca, 27 May 2011.

more than them'.<sup>260</sup> This determination and willpower paid off, as while she was completing her dissertation, Giovanna was invited to work for the chemistry college as an administrator. Three months later, one of her biology teachers called to ask if she wanted to work for a prestigious health clinic in Cuenca in their chemistry lab. Consequently, Giovanna scheduled her time to work for the clinic in the mornings and the college in the afternoons, before working on her dissertation in the evenings. This timetable was extremely challenging, both mentally and physically, and so Giovanna said she did not know how she managed it. She had returned to Cañar by this point, to live at home while finishing her thesis, so she spent much time travelling to and from Cuenca. Despite this:

I enjoyed working in both places and I wanted to work too. Because, apart from that, my parents no longer supported me economically then, so I had to find money elsewhere. When I think about it now, I really don't know how I did it.<sup>261</sup>

Giovanna continued to work for the clinic and college after graduation for three years. However, with different life ambitions developing, she wished to open her own laboratory clinic. She and a friend, who handled microbiology well, resigned from the clinic and opened a laboratory in Gualaceo.<sup>262</sup> A year later, continuing to look to the future and the need to provide economic support to her siblings so that their father could return to Ecuador, Giovanna sold her share of the laboratory in September 2010. This decision was also motivated by respiratory problems acquired as a consequence of early morning travel between Cuenca and Gualaceo in cold Andean temperatures. Instead, Giovanna 'decided to invest in embroidery machinery'.<sup>263</sup>

She began a business designing and making borders for *polleras*, creating designs that were then digitally sewn by machine. She employed several people to help. Several months later, she was called to work for another laboratory in Cuenca, and so returned to living in the city, while maintaining her embroidery business in

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<sup>260</sup> *Uno tiene que ser muy responsable en sus cosas, muy responsable y así también demostrar también a la gente mestiza, que duda de nuestras capacidades, que somos súper capaces y quizás más que ellos.* Interview: Cuenca, 27 May 2011.

<sup>261</sup> *Bueno, en los dos lugares me gustaba trabajar y quería también trabajar. Porque aparte de eso, de por ejemplo económicamente mis papás, ya yo regresé y ellos como que ya llegué, no me daban más economía y tenía que sacar de algún lado ¿pues no? Ahora me pongo a pensar y digo en realidad, no sé cómo, como lo logré.* Interview: Cuenca, 27 May 2011.

<sup>262</sup> Gualaceo is a small Andean town situated around an hour from Cuenca by bus.

<sup>263</sup> *Entonces decidí invertir en unas máquinas, unas bordadoras.* Interview: Cuenca, 27 May 2011.



Cañar. Every weekend she returned to Cañar to visit family, when she also hosted a radio programme aimed at young people that discussed cultural issues and popular topics alongside playing folkloric music. Giovanna had always been involved with community and organisational activities, and described herself as being a natural “leader”. She attributed this to her long-standing need to help her mother make decisions at home. The Cañari community also valued her due to her professional status:

... they have a lot of trust in me. I try not to be selfish and am happy to help people to the best of my ability when people call me for help. Although I haven’t used my profession in Cañar, people respect me. I always greet people in the street. You have to give respect too. Many people ask when I am coming back to Cañar to work, and I tell them that I want to study a little more first.<sup>264</sup>

Giovanna hoped to do a microbiology course in the future. She also reflected on her life and work in Cuenca:

For me it is a privilege to work at a prestigious clinic here. Despite all the circumstances that we could talk about, my strength is that my self-esteem is always at its highest. For example, I first arrived at my job wearing my *pollera*. It was a shock for people I think, asking who I am and what I’m doing... The clientele is wealthy. So people were a little reserved at first, doubting capabilities. But with time, I always say, ‘demonstrate you are capable, that you can do it, and the rest will come by guessing’. So I never had any problem working there. I did a good job as you can see it in patient’s reactions to you. Sometimes they would wait for you to attend to them despite there being others available. So that fills you with satisfaction, and you say, ‘I am finally doing things well’... I have never had to provide a CV and papers for jobs, I am always called for a job... people have always congratulated me – ‘it is very good that we think indigenous people are very capable, how cool that you’re working here’. And many people like that I maintain my identity.<sup>265</sup>

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<sup>264</sup> ... me tienen mucha confianza. Yo en lo personal pienso no ser egoísta, porque hay gente que de pronto me ha llamado, me ha dicho ayúdame en esto, yo en lo que puedo y en lo que está en mis capacidades con todo el gusto del mundo yo les he ayudado. Con todo el gusto, entonces la gente, a pesar de que yo todavía no me he desempeñado profesionalmente en Cañar, la gente me respeta mucho. Cuando camino por la calle también saludo a todos, entonces es uno darse respetar también. Claro que mucha gente también me dice, ‘bueno y cuándo vuelves a Cañar, y cuándo te desempeñas acá? Y yo les he explicado las razones por las que yo todavía no vuelvo a Cañar a desempeñarme profesionalmente, porque todavía quiero estudiar un poco más. Interview: Cuenca, 27 May 2011.

<sup>265</sup> ... profesionalmente empezar a desempeñarme en una clínica prestigiosa aquí de nombre en la Ciudad, es digamos que para mí un privilegio. Porque, y a pesar de, de todas las circunstancias lo que tal vez digamos, que lo fuerte mío es de que siempre pienso que mi autoestima está por todo lo alto. ‘Entonces yo por ejemplo llegaba a mi trabajo a la clínica pero con pollera. Entonces ya igual al inicio todo es un, pienso que un shock, de decir ‘y está ahora, que hace aquí?... Y la clínica es una gente pudiente y con dinero. Entonces al inicio como que un poquito se reservaba la gente ¿no? Como que dudan de las capacidades. Pero pasa el tiempo y siempre yo digo, o sea, ‘tú demuestra de que eres capaz, de que puedes llegar y el resto, el resto se te viene por añadidura’. Entonces

When talking about community and professional engagement here, Giovanna highlighted different aspects of her character. She aims to work collectively with others, gaining respect and recognition from those around her. She is confident in her identity as an indigenous woman, with a level of psychological empowerment, and finds personal satisfaction in her job. Giovanna is clearly motivated and ambitious. She is a grounded individual with a deep sense of what she wants from life. She appreciates her family and is keen to help her siblings, nieces and nephews achieve their dreams and aspirations. Giovanna appeared to be an empowered woman on multiple levels. Not only as a consequence of education, but also from the strength and encouragement she has received from her parents. Yet, when I asked Giovanna what the word ‘*empoderamiento*’ meant to her, she said:

It is a popular word. How do I say it? I don’t know what empowerment is. I have heard it, I mean, in nearly all the conferences they use it; empowerment of knowledge, abilities, capabilities, etc. And what is this? For example, I would relate empowerment to women’s rights. It is the same as saying, ‘I respect women’, no? Respecting women helps to extract our capabilities. I think that, but personally, I don’t use that word, as I don’t understand it.<sup>266</sup>

Giovanna’s response is noteworthy. In one way she has heard many of the words associated with the concept, as described within academia, via public spaces such as conferences. Yet her interpretation is that it relates to individuals respecting women. When women and their rights are respected, they can act and utilise their capabilities. The notion of empowerment means little to her, however. She continued to say:

In the Andes that [empowerment] doesn’t fit. Because, for us, empowerment is things, male and female, but even further, it is duality, equilibrium, complementarity of everything as a pair. I have my rights as a woman; the

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*no tuve ningún inconveniente yo cuando trabajé ahí. Me he desempeñado muy bien pienso yo, porque tú ves eso en la reacción de los pacientes, de la gente. De que un paciente regresa, un chequeo del siguiente mes y habiendo varias personas que trabajamos en el mismo lugar, esperan para que seas tú la que la atiendas. Entonces eso te llena de satisfacción y dices ‘bueno, a la final estoy haciendo bien las cosas ¿no?’ ... Bueno, puedo decirte que hasta ahora, yo no he tenido la necesidad de hacer una carpeta y de poner los papeles y de poner el . . . y de ver si me llaman a dar el trabajo. Siempre me han llamado... gente siempre me ha felicitado y que ‘me parece muy bien que los indígenas también nosotros pensamos que son muy capaces y que chévere que esté trabajando ya acá’. Y mucha gente, que lo que le ha gustado a la gente, es de que yo mantenga mi identidad. Interview: Cuenca, 27 May 2011.*

<sup>266</sup> *es una palabra en auge como yo le digo, ya no sé que es empoderamiento. yo he escuchado y he escuchado por ejemplo este, este en casi la mayoría de las conferencias lo utilizan, el empoderamiento de los saberes, el empoderamiento de los poderes, el empoderamiento de de tus capacidades, el empoderamiento de todo yo sí oí. Y eso que es, y eso que es, por ejemplo yo lo relacionaría el empoderamiento en el derecho de las mujeres es el mismo hecho de yo decir el respeto a las mujeres ¿no? El respeto a las mujeres y el y el nosotras sacar a flote nuestras capacidades. Pienso que, que así, pero yo en lo personal no uso esta palabra, porque no la entiendo. Interview: Cuenca, 27 May 2011.*

man has his rights as a man. But it isn't that he does his things over there and I do mine over here. It is the union of two forces. I have never had a problem with this, as since school I have had male and female friends, and we have played in mixed groups etc. So, women's empowerment is nothing more than feminism. And that for me is an extreme, because they suddenly instil in you that you have to behave rebelliously. And I don't agree with that.<sup>267</sup>

Giovanna's commentary here links directly to the Andean gender system of complementarity, thus explaining why for her, the idea of empowerment seems irrelevant in her life. Her understanding of gendered relationships between men and women alludes to the concept of collectivity, working together and being in balance with one another, rather than men and women acting in separate individual spaces, with a need to challenge those that are in those spaces. This appears to be her theory. Nonetheless, she also highlighted that it has taken years for indigenous women to access public spaces and engage in public roles, and so as an indigenous woman, 'as soon as you break the rule where you are, you have to emerge and demonstrate that yes, we can do it'.<sup>268</sup> Giovanna consequently recognises that in practice, gender roles are not balanced. Yet, as someone who is "breaking the rules", it seems that she does not consider this to be an act of empowerment. Her *power within*, towards *power with* and *power to*, is a western-based idea. Giovanna's process, for her, does not have a name.

### **5.3 Domestic Spaces and Higher Education**

#### **Nuria**

Nuria was born in 1981. She is the eldest of three children with a younger sister and brother. Nuria's father died aged 36 when Nuria was eleven years old. When he was alive, he worked for INIAP, a government body that works in agriculture, forestry

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<sup>267</sup> *En la parte andina no cabe eso no no cuadra porque para nosotros el empoderamiento de las cosas, los hombres, las mujeres sino más bien es la dualidad, el equilibrio, la complementariedad de todo ir a la par ¿no? De que yo tengo mis derechos como mujer, el hombre también tiene derechos como hombre y pero no es que él hace las cosas por allá ni que yo hago las cosas por acá. Es la unión de esas dos fuerzas, porque siempre estamos, bueno yo no tengo problema en eso porque desde la escuela yo no tenía compañeros hombres y compañeras mujeres y si hacíamos el grupo de juegos también eran mezclados hombres y mujeres y cosas así. Entonces no es nada más que el hecho del empoderamiento de las mujeres, sino y el feminismo. Y eso también es un--pienso que para mí es un extremo porque te están de pronto inculcando a que tienes que portarte rebelde ¿no? Pienso y, o porque yo, pero yo eso no comparto. Interview: Cuenca, 27 May 2011.*

<sup>268</sup> *... una vez que vos rompés el esquema ahí sí ya está donde vos tienes que que que aflorar y demostrar que que sí, que sí podemos. Interview: Cuenca, 27 May 2011.*

and agri-business.<sup>269</sup> Nuria's mother, Flor, worked as a nurse (see 'Flor' in Chapter VI). In this light, Nuria said, 'let's say we lived OK more or less... There was no *machismo* in the sense that the woman couldn't work. They both contributed to the household economy'.<sup>270</sup> When her father died, financial life became more difficult, as they only relied on their mother's income. In turn, Nuria was given more responsibility for her siblings while her mother worked and was involved in the community as a leader. Nuria consequently spent a lot of her adolescence at home, as her siblings were two and six years younger, which created a strong bond between them. Nuria believes 'my siblings see me like a second mum. As I am the eldest they tell me things or ask me questions, and I explain things to them and give advice'.<sup>271</sup> Nuria also recognised the significance of her mother's effort to provide for her children so that they could have an education: 'we continued forward because my mother helped us to study. We began and finished school, and we went to university. At home, education was the priority'.<sup>272</sup> Flor's attitude towards her children's well-being and education, let alone her income generation capabilities following her husband's death, were both clearly significant in relation to Nuria's ability to become educated. Education had always been important to Nuria's parents. When her father died, Nuria reflected on his dreams for his children, which also motivated Nuria to continue her studies:

My father said that I had to continue to exceed myself, that I had to study. So after he died I believe this stuck in my mind, that I had to continue studying. That was me in life. And I followed in the shoes of my father because he studied in the agricultural college. And so I went there too, later going down the branch of agricultural engineering.<sup>273</sup>

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<sup>269</sup> Instituto Nacional Autónomo de Investigaciones Agropecuarias <http://www.iniap.gob.ec>

<sup>270</sup> *Entonces vivíamos digamos que más o menos bien... No había ese machismo de que no, que la mujer no tiene que trabajar, de quedar en la casa nosotros, los dos trabajaban. Y los dos aportaban la economía al hogar.* Nuria: Cañar, 20 June 2011..

<sup>271</sup> *... mis hermanos me ven como una segunda mamá. Que yo soy la mayor entonces me cuentan sus cosas o me preguntan, porque yo soy la mayor, que les indique alguna cosa o que les aconseje en alguna cosa.* Nuria: Cañar, 20 June 2011..

<sup>272</sup> *Salimos adelante porque mi mamá nos dio el estudio... comenzamos la escuela, terminamos escuela, colegio, y nos fuimos a la, a la universidad. En mi hogar la educación era lo, era lo primero.* Nuria: Cañar, 20 June 2011.

<sup>273</sup> *mi papá decía que tengo que seguir superándome, tengo que seguir estudiando. Y pues cuando ya falleció pues creo que eso quedó en mi mente que tengo que seguir estudiando. Ese era mí en la vida. Y seguí casi los pasos de mi papá porque él estudió en colegio agropecuario. Sí, entonces yo igual seguí en ese colegio y después como estaba en esa rama me fui a la ingeniería agronómica.* Interview: Cañar, 20 June 2011.

Thus, Nuria's father also played a noteworthy role in her decision-making process over going to university, despite his absence. After she began higher education, however, the family economy could not continue to support Nuria's studies. Consequently, having met Judy years before, Nuria applied to Judy's fund for a scholarship after her first year. Nuria said, 'thanks to this, I finished studying'.<sup>274</sup> In addition to the scholarship, Nuria also worked weekends at a restaurant in Cuenca to help pay for transport and food.

Nuria was one of the first people from San Rafael community to go to university, and she was the only indigenous woman on the course, along with three indigenous men. Like Alejandra, Julia, Sisa and Giovanna noted the difficulty in leaving their families and moving to the city, Nuria too commented on this aspect, although she seemed to appreciate the freedom it gave: 'the experience of learning how to be independent was nice'.<sup>275</sup> Rather than finding living alone a challenge, Nuria turned it into a positive.

Nuria's university experience and graduating as a single woman differed to those in section 5.2, as she met her husband and got married in her fifth year of study.<sup>276</sup> He was studying in the same department, but graduated before Nuria, who fell pregnant quickly after they got married. I asked Nuria how she balanced her university and motherhood responsibilities:

As I was pregnant I couldn't do the course for graduation. I held off for a year and delayed my graduation until my daughter was one and a half, so that it was easier to leave her here [in Cañar] while I did the graduating course. At the beginning it was horrid, leaving my daughter here with my mum, and I came back every weekend. It wasn't for very long though, maybe three or four months.<sup>277</sup>

Nuria was fortunate in that she could postpone the completion of her degree, and did not have to sacrifice significant time with her child. As Nuria's husband had taken the same degree course, he was also available to help Nuria while she finished her studies. Nuria expressed that her husband had always provided encouragement,

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<sup>274</sup> *Y gracias a eso terminé de estudiar.* Interview: Cañar, 20 June 2011.

<sup>275</sup> *Bonita la experiencia para aprender y saber ser independiente.*

<sup>276</sup> This also differs to Alejandra, who began university as a married woman.

<sup>277</sup> *Por lo que estaba embarazada y no podía, no podía hacer el curso de graduación. Me quedé yo un año. Yo para graduarme hice el curso de graduación y--pero hice cuando mi hija ya tenía año y medio más o menos. Sí ya estaba, la podía dejar. Al principio era un poquito feo porque yo tenía que dejar a mi hija aquí con mi con mi mamá y yo tuve que ir a clases. Y venía yo cada fines de semana. Y no era por mucho tiempo, creo tres o cuatro meses en hacer un curso de graduación.* Interview: Cañar, 20 June 2011.

commenting that: ‘He’s never said I can’t work, he wants me to, and he wants us to move forward. He tells me that if I have the chance to continue to excel myself more and do a masters degree, then I should’.<sup>278</sup> Likewise, as her husband was from another indigenous group and not Cañari, Nuria noted that he had never forced her to change her style of dress to meet his. She explained how in some provinces, women marrying into a new group were made to change their attire: ‘He said, “I met you this way, you must continue this way, if you wish”’.<sup>279</sup> As Nuria’s husband appears to value and support her, this can only have helped in the completion of her degree.

Since finishing university Nuria has had another child. She commented that having children had changed her life and becoming a mother had been a ‘beautiful experience’.<sup>280</sup> She mentioned how a teacher had once said to her, ‘I will be proud when my children have surpassed me’.<sup>281</sup> Nuria said she also had this in her own mind, her ‘children have to be more than me and exceed their parents’.<sup>282</sup> She is therefore working so that they can have everything in life, ‘so that they can progress’.<sup>283</sup> Given Nuria’s own mother had worked hard to provide for her children, Nuria’s statement helps to reinforce how elders, particularly parents, can influence what an individual desires for themselves and their children. Equally, Nuria and her husband appeared to have found a balance in their lives as working parents. Nuria said that although it can be complicated at times, ‘we are working however we can. At weekends I cook and clean, and he helps me with the children, making the beds, cleaning the house. We both do it’.<sup>284</sup> By sharing responsibilities and assisting one another, Nuria and her husband had found a way to raise a family while carrying out professional roles.

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<sup>278</sup> *Mi esposo no me ha dicho que no puedo trabajar. Él quiere que trabaje, que salgamos adelante. Inclusive él me dice si pueda tener yo esa posibilidad de seguir superándose en hacer la maestría que está bien.* Interview: Cañar, 20 June 2011.

<sup>279</sup> *Él decía: Yo te conocí así, pues así tienes que seguir si te gusta o tú eres así.*

<sup>280</sup> *Algo que cambió mi vida... ser mamá. Tener bebés. Bonita la experiencia.* Interview: Cañar, 20 June 2011.

<sup>281</sup> *Así un profesor decía: Yo me sentiré orgulloso de mis hijos cuando ellos me superen a mí.* Interview: Cañar, 20 June 2011.

<sup>282</sup> *Entonces yo creo que eso también está en mi mente. Que mis hijos tienen que ser más que mí. Superar, superar a los papás.* Interview: Cañar, 20 June 2011.

<sup>283</sup> *... que salgan adelante.* Interview: Cañar, 20 June 2011.

<sup>284</sup> *...estamos trabajando en lo que se pueda. Y en los quehaceres de la casa los fines de semana yo me dedico a cocinar, a lavar, y él me ayuda así con los niños a, a verlos a cambiarlos, a hacer la cama limpiar la casa. Todos hacemos. ... que salgan adelante.* Interview: Cañar, 20 June 2011.

Following graduation, Nuria had held a number of different employment positions. She worked for an electrical company for three years, and also worked for a provincial municipality in their technical development team. Her higher education was consequently used in a practical sense, and Nuria had found mechanisms to generate an income through her professional qualification. Nuria also opened up a stall selling *polleras* in Cañar town centre, where she worked in the afternoons. She was a member of a local stallholders association, to which sellers could make a monthly payment. The funds collected were put towards helping respective families when required, and carrying out projects. She had been elected as the association President and believed she had been chosen for this role due to her advanced education, although she had had little interest in holding it: 'I opposed it because I was working and needed to be at home a lot more, and my children didn't want me to take it. But they said, 'we have elected you', so I couldn't refuse it'.<sup>285</sup> While this serves to show that the wider community respected and valued Nuria's higher education, Nuria also recognised that this role conflicted with her domestic responsibilities.

At the time of interview Nuria was working as a teacher at Instituto Quilloac, and had ambitions to carry out a masters in education. This latter desire was motivated by a change in the law:

In order to continue as a teacher they require that you have a degree in teaching, and mine isn't. So for this reason they ask us to do a masters in teaching. Thus it is a bit limiting for me because I have to do a masters, and master's cost. It is a little expensive. I got married, I have two children. So it makes it complicated for me, but I don't lose hope of going somewhere, having an opportunity, a scholarship like the one I had that helped me, in order to continue working as a teacher, as I enjoy teaching.<sup>286</sup>

Thus, despite the economic limitations due to her family being the first priority, Nuria knew what she enjoyed and wanted to do next in order to progress professionally. She understood what was stopping her, but did not give up hope that

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<sup>285</sup> ... *me opuse porque estaba trabajando mas deber en la casa. Mis hijos, no querían, pero me decían que no que ya hemos elegido a usted y tiene que ser. Entonces ya no pude negarme.* Interview: Cañar, 20 June 2011.

<sup>286</sup> *Piden para seguir siendo profesores que teníamos que tener un título de, en docencia, y mi título no es de docencia. Entonces para eso nos piden hacer una maestría en docencia. Entonces es un poquito limitante para mí porque tengo que hacer una maestría y las maestrías cuestan. Es un poquito caro. Yo ya me casé, tengo ya dos hijos. Entonces se me hace un poquito complicado pero no, no pierdo las esperanzas de, de ir en algún lado, qué sé yo, una oportunidad, una beca así como a mí me ayudaron para, para seguir trabajando de profesora porque sí, sí me gusta sí ser profesora.* Interview: Cañar, 20 June 2011.

it would be possible one day. She could therefore envision her future and set goals for herself.

Nuria believed that the presence of bilingual education had made a noteworthy impact on ‘opening up doors for indigenous people. They prepare themselves, and others [*mestizos*] realise that they cannot manipulate or marginalise us so easily’.<sup>287</sup> Nuria thought that she herself had become an example to others in the community; they said, ‘she was able to become someone, why can’t we too?’<sup>288</sup> She explained how she foresaw indigenous women would be even less discriminated in the future, as laws protecting women were allowing them to move forward: ‘I think you’ll see more trained women, more women leaders, with a profession. It’s not only men who can use the word ‘rights’, but we women too have rights to be someone, to surpass ourselves, to live and be happy’.<sup>289</sup>

Nuria mentioned how the term “power” meant that ‘you can do something. It is a word that means you can do everything’.<sup>290</sup> Although Nuria’s interview was one of the shorter ones carried out, the data gained from it indicated that Nuria had found *power* to achieve her objectives and overcome difficulties. With the exception of losing her father, Nuria appeared to have had a secure family life as a child, she did not face ethnic subordination at university, nor had she encountered discrimination or elements of *machismo* within her marriage. She commented that ‘my husband doesn’t behave like a *machista*’, and she felt *machismo* originated when ‘men lack self-esteem themselves, and lack education’.<sup>291</sup> Likewise, becoming a mother had been a positive experience for her, which was pushing her to strive further forwards professionally in order to provide and maintain her children. Her empowerment process had encapsulated many facilitating factors, which provided her with an optimistic outlook.

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<sup>287</sup> ... *abriendo las puertas a los indígenas. Ya se van preparándose, ya se van dándose cuenta la gente, entonces ya no se deja manipular o marginar tan fácilmente.* Interview: Cañar, 20 June 2011.

<sup>288</sup> ... *si ella también llegó a ser alguien, ¿porqué nosotros también, no?* Interview: Cañar, 20 June 2011.

<sup>289</sup> *Yo creo que va a haber más adelante de las, de las mujeres; mas mueres capacitadas, más mujeres líderes, con profesión, veo así yo el futuro. no solamente los hombres pueden, pueden--digamos poder usar esa palabra ‘derechos’ sino las mujeres también tenemos digamos derecho a a ser alguien, a superarse, a, a vivir, a ser felices.*

<sup>290</sup> ... *se puede realizar algo. Con esa palabra se puede hacer todo, digamos.* Interview: Cañar, 20 June 2011.

<sup>291</sup> ...  *digo mi esposo no se comporta como de machistas... yo creo que el machismo es un--por falta de, de autoestima de ellos mismos y por falta un poquito de educación.* Interview: Cañar, 20 June 2011.



## **Suyana**

Suyana was born in 1984. She is the first child of four girls. As a child she was close to her mother's cousins, who would take her to school. Her father worked in agriculture and cattle herding, but when Suyana was in fifth grade he migrated to the USA. Suyana told me: 'that hurt me a lot as I was always glued to my father. Thankfully he has always supported and loved us'.<sup>292</sup> As Suyana was about to start agricultural college, her mother also decided to migrate, leaving Suyana behind with her three sisters. This was clearly painful for Suyana, who, while telling me the story, was wiping tears away; 'I failed in college', she said.<sup>293</sup> Ima, Suyana's aunt, has in turn been a constant support throughout her adolescent and early adult years in the absence of her parents. Ima commented how: 'I have brought up my four nieces as if they were my own, because their mother was in the USA for four years... They treat me like their mother, and I too treat them like my daughters'.<sup>294</sup>

Koya, Ima's daughter, told me how close her cousins were to her mother, and that having their parents migrate to the USA had a significant impact on Suyana in particular.<sup>295</sup> Ima's reflection on her sister leaving was that it left the family 'shattered', and upon her sister's return, the girls 'grew apart from her [the mother] a lot'.<sup>296</sup> Koya said, 'I think they were angry that she abandoned them... that's why they are closer to my mother now'.<sup>297</sup> I asked Ima why her sister came back: 'because Suyana was finishing college. I knew I had to tell her to come back because she [Suyana] was going to study at university in Riobamba, and my sister needed to come back and look after the younger ones'.<sup>298</sup> Ima therefore looked out for Suyana's best interests. Koya explained that Ima had 'argued with Suyana's mother because her parents did not want her to go and study. She fought with them so that she could

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<sup>292</sup> ...eso a mí me dolió mucho porque yo siempre era pegada a mi papi todo. Se fue gracias a dios él siempre nos ha querido y siempre, siempre nos ha apoyado. Interview: Cañar, 21 June 2011.

<sup>293</sup> yo perdí en el colegio. Interview: Suyana, Cañar, 21 June 2011

<sup>294</sup> Yo a las cuatro sobrinas que tengo he criado como si fueran ser mis hijas. Porque la mamá estaba cuatro años en Estados Unidos. Y ellos hacen como yo para la mamá de ellos, y yo también hago para mis hijas. Interview: Cañar, 7 June 2011.

<sup>295</sup> Interview: Koya, Cañar, 7 July 2011.

<sup>296</sup> quedamos bien destrozadas... ellas se alejaron los hijos bastante de ella. Interview: Ima, Cañar, 7 June 2011.

<sup>297</sup> Creo que estaban brava porque les abandonó... Por eso son más apegadas a mi mami ahora. Interview: Koya, Cañar, 7 July 2011.

<sup>298</sup> Porque ya, ya la hija mayor se terminó en el colegio. Entonces yo dije yo sabía decir que venga porque ella va a estudiar la universidad y se va a ir a Río Bamba, y que venga porque ella tiene que hacer cargo de los otros menores que había. Interview: Ima, Cañar, 7 June 2011.

leave. My father helped her find a scholarship'.<sup>299</sup> Suyana's mother returned just before Suyana graduated from college. Her mother, however, did not support her decision to go to university in Riobamba, nor did Suyana's father want her to leave Cañar. He wanted her to stay and study technology instead. Ima, on the other hand, had a different attitude towards Suyana's decision; 'my aunt supported me and told me to go to Riobamba, that she would help me'.<sup>300</sup> Thus, Suyana's support network lay within her extended family, and did not necessarily lie with her parents. This contrasts with the other participant narratives above, except for Julia's. Like Julia's, Suyana's parents did not complete school and placed little importance on their children's education. Ima is Suyana's only aunt or uncle to complete college. Likewise, out of Suyana's many cousins, only two were university students.<sup>301</sup>

With Ima's encouragement, Suyana began studying agricultural business at university, and received a scholarship via Judy's fund in her second year. Suyana enjoyed socialising with people from different places: 'as we were all there without family, we tried to get on as best as possible'.<sup>302</sup> Suyana found living several hours away from Cañar hard, particularly as her accommodation was cramped and her landlady placed restrictions on the use of services, such as water. Even so, it was clear that Suyana had had positive experiences at university and learnt a lot from her course. She had the opportunity to visit new places, such as micro enterprises that produced products such as cheese, jam, sausages, and wool linen. This gave her and some friends the idea to begin a mini-cooperative, in order to help fund their university living costs. This group dissolved, however, when Suyana left to do her practical study away from town, as other members were not interested in maintaining it. Suyana was clearly the lynchpin of the group. She said, 'I would like to work in groups but that experience showed me I need serious and responsible

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<sup>299</sup> ... *peleó con la mamá de ella para que mi prima Nancy vaya a estudiar a Rio Bamba. Porque ellos no querían, los papas de ella no querían que ella vaya a estudiar. Y, bueno mi mami peleó con ellos para que pudiera ella ir a estudiar. Y mi papá le ayudó a sacar la beca.* Interview: Cañar, 7 July 2011.

<sup>300</sup> ... *mi tía mismo me apoyó y me dijo que fuera no más allá a Rio Bamba que ella me iba a ayudar.* Interview: Cañar, 21 June 2011.

<sup>301</sup> Suyana's father was one of eleven children; hence her extended family is large as she has a lot of cousins.

<sup>302</sup> ... *como todos estamos allá sin familia, tratamos de llevarnos lo mejor posible.* Interview: Cañar, 21 June 2011.

people. Otherwise, if we don't work for a communal goal, it is not possible'.<sup>303</sup> Thus, Suyana highlights that she not only enjoys working alongside others, with potential to generate collective empowerment, but in order to create the environment for this to flourish, all participants need to have the same ambition.

Suyana carried out her practical study with an NGO working in productive projects and microcredit with poor suburban groups around the town of Chimboran in Chimborazo province. She was responsible for leading workshops for the NGO in communities that produced cheese:

I had to go to the cheese factories to give workshops. Because, at times, although we indigenous people are in the countryside, we don't always know the right process or how to follow the rules, or put in the correct quantities of ingredients. So I went and helped assist them so that they could improve the product... To be a facilitator is a responsibility because, although I know how to talk to indigenous people and am not intimidated, I had to say the right things and be sure about what I was saying. As, if I didn't, they could make bad cheese. So I had to be well prepared, to be able to share with them and encourage them to be open and engage with what I had learnt.<sup>304</sup>

In this situation, Suyana was directly employing the knowledge she had gained in her degree programme in order to benefit other's livelihoods. Further, Suyana's indigenous identity aided communication with the workshop participants, meaning her ethnicity was an advantage.

In her sixth semester, Suyana met her husband and they married soon after. Reflecting on her relationship with her aunt, Suyana commented that she 'got angry with me because I got married before finishing my studies'.<sup>305</sup> Suyana gave birth to a son in her eighth semester. At this point Suyana said Ima was a little cross, but it was not long until they were friends again; 'It's like that - she always supports me in

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<sup>303</sup> ... *si me gustaría así trabajar en grupo pero con esa experiencia que tuve digo yo necesito personas serias y responsables... si es que no trabajamos todos por un objetivo en común, no podemos.* Interview: Cañar, 21 June 2011.

<sup>304</sup> ... *yo tenía que salir a las queserías a dar charlas. Porque en las queserías a veces nosotros mismo así como indígenas que estamos en el campo no no sabemos el proceso correcto, o no sabemos elaborar bajo las normas, o no sabemos poner las cantidades correctas de los cuajos o de los conservantes. Entonces ese era mi rol... Ser capacitadora es una responsabilidad. Primero, porque o sea yo sé que estudiar, y yo sé que iba a hablar con indígenas, o sea, el hablar no me intimida mucho porque, porque un poco si me desenvuelvo. Entonces, entonces ya, o sea, tener que decir las cosas bien y tenía que estar segura de lo que estoy diciendo. Porque yo imagínese si es que yo voy a dar una mala fórmula, todo el queso hecho pedazos. O sea yo tenía que prepararme también bien pues, para poder yo compartir a ellos y que ellos también estén abiertos, que estén gustosos de que quieran aprender para yo poder compartir algo de lo que yo también había aprendido.* Interview: Cañar, 21 June 2011.

<sup>305</sup> ... *mi tía también se enojó conmigo porque yo me había casado antes de terminar de estudiar.* Interview: Cañar, 21 June 2011.

everything. She's like a mother to me... I thank my family - my grandmother and my aunt. They have guided me along a good path and I am always going to be grateful to them for that'.<sup>306</sup> Focusing on Ima and her grandmother here in particular, Suyana reinforces how her extended family have played a more significant role in her emotional life and psychological empowerment than her parents.

Becoming a mother while studying presented a lot of challenges for Suyana; most noticeably in context to her relationship with her son. Suyana's husband got a job in Quito as soon as their son was born. This led Suyana to encounter conflicts between childcare and studying:

At times I had to do work and I couldn't because my son was very restless, and I couldn't leave him to cry because other people lived in other rooms. So I had to hold him and go for a walk so that he wouldn't cry. Then when he slept I studied, or I did housework quickly.<sup>307</sup>

Although her husband visited them every weekend, helping Suyana with their son and domestic chores so that she could study, it was not enough: 'I had to decide whether my son stayed with me or not. So I had to leave him here [in Cañar]'.<sup>308</sup> This in turn also meant that Suyana had to juggle her schedule to accommodate study with visiting Cañar every weekend to see him:

As soon as classes finished I ran to Cañar. My classmates and I got on well and I would do the work ahead of time so that I could come here at the weekends... they supported me, saying "go, do the work apart, and show us when you get back"...<sup>309</sup>

Suyana evidently had a network of understanding friends around her who sympathised and tried to fit their work alongside her familial commitments. Her husband also demonstrated support by travelling several hours back to Cañar from

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<sup>306</sup> *Y está así, igual así siempre vengo, me apoya en todo mismo, así siempre así, ella es como una mamá también para mí... Agradezco a mi familia. Mi abuelita, mi tía, o sea me han guiado por un buen camino y, y siempre voy a estar agradecida con ellos.* Interview: Suyana, Cañar, 21 June 2011.

<sup>307</sup> *Yo a veces tenía que hacer cualquier trabajo y yo no podía porque mi hijo era bien inquieto y así y también o sea yo no podía dejar que lllore porque yo vivía aquí en este cuarto y acá en el otro vivía otra persona, al frente vivía otra persona y o sea ahí vivían más arrendatarios y más inquilinos, y yo igual o sea no podía dejar que lllore ni nada mi hijo. Entonces tenía que amargarla estar así paseando para que él no lllore. Y así ya cuando se dormía estudiaba o hacía los deberes rápido.* Interview: Cañar, 21 June 2011.

<sup>308</sup> *Ya era de decidirme si es que se quedaba aquí o qué pasa. Entonces ya le tuve que dejar aquí ...* Interview: Cañar, 21 June 2011.

<sup>309</sup> *Ya se terminaba clases corría a Cañar, entonces. Con mis compañeros de aula nos llevábamos bien. Yo hacía las, yo hacía así los trabajos por adelantado para que para yo poder venir los fines de semana... ellos también me ayudaban, decían "ándate ya entonces haz los estudios aparte y cuando vengas expones"...* Interview: Cañar, 21 June 2011.

Quito on Fridays to be with them both. ‘That’s how we lived, always traveling and coming to be with my son’, she said.<sup>310</sup> Upon reflection, however, Suyana told me that this decision had wider implications:

One year here with my mother and my son was losing affection for me. He would call me sister, and didn’t call me mummy. He would call me mummy when he wanted, but mainly sister or even ‘Suyana’, I mean how he withdrew love for me, and he didn’t want to be with me. The same at home – he was still small and so slept with my mum, he didn’t sleep next to me, as he wasn’t used to it.<sup>311</sup>

This was clearly a traumatic situation for Suyana, as she noted, ‘later, I spent all the time I could trying to recuperate my son’s affection for me’.<sup>312</sup> The decision Suyana had made to leave her son in Cañar was in order to meet the everyday demands of each other. Suyana required the time and space to study effectively in order to finish university, while her son needed care and attention that Suyana struggled to balance against her studies. As such, both had been suffering. Suyana did not have the resources to hire a nanny, or send her son to day care so that he could remain close to her. Her husband needed to work in order to help support his family. Suyana’s options were consequently restricted and she had to rely on those nearest to her for help, who were several hours away by bus.

Since finishing university, Suyana decided that she would stay at home and look after her son given the time she had spent away from him and the impact this had had on their emotional bond. By this point her husband was working for a local indigenous organisation called TUCAYTA in Cañar, so she and her family were financially secure. This meant there was no economic requirement for her to find an income. Suyana expressed how when she graduated she felt very happy: ‘it was a dream that I had had since before finishing college. When you fulfil a dream then you feel very content with yourself because you have achieved something you

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<sup>310</sup> *Entonces así pasábamos siempre viajando y viniendo para estar igual con mi hijo.* Interview: Cañar, 21 June 2011.

<sup>311</sup> *Un año aquí a mi hijo con mi mami, entonces estaba descariñándose de mí, a mi me decía ñaña, entonces no me decía mi mamá nada. A veces sí cuando quería me decía mami, a veces me decía me decía ñaña, o no, ‘Suyana’ me decía, o sea como que se descariñó, no quería estar conmigo entonces. Así igual en la casa, como él todavía era pequeño y dormía así con mi mami, no sabía querer dormir conmigo.* Interview: Cañar, 21 June 2011.

<sup>312</sup> *Luego pasé aquí todo el tiempo tratando de recuperar todo el cariño de mi hijo.* Interview: Cañar, 21 June 2011.

wanted'.<sup>313</sup> It can be argued that Suyana felt empowered by what she had accomplished. Suyana was also resourcefully using her degree and knowledge by making yoghurt and jams at weekends to sell nearby, as this was something she could do from home. Hence, she had found a way to accommodate her domestic life with developing a small source of income; an indicator of economic empowerment via acquired skills.

Although Suyana had made the choice not to look for paid work, and make her family a priority, she told me, 'I am a little sad because I am not working. This makes me feel embarrassed in front of Judy and my family; I have studied but I cannot work'.<sup>314</sup> In response to this I felt it necessary to clarify what she had meant; did she mean she *could not* work because of her son, or because she had *made a conscious decision not to* work? She said:

At the moment my son needs me. While he is little I can help him. Later he'll be able to defend himself. So yes, I want to be with him for at least two years, because at the moment he does not read or write. He is currently learning vowels, how to count, and learning colours. This is all new to him and he has to adapt to school. This year they will have to learn how to write... So I talked to Judy and said, "At the moment I am dedicated to my son because now I have the opportunity to be with him". I feel like I should be with him because as he gets older and has learnt to read and write, he is going to tell me to leave him alone. Right now he asks me to help him study.<sup>315</sup>

This response suggested that Suyana had made a conscious decision based on the emotional needs of both herself and her son. It did not tell me that she had been restricted to work by other external structures such as the employment market, or familial expectations over gendered domestic roles of women in childrearing.

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<sup>313</sup> ...fue todo un sueño, una meta que yo tenía desde antes de terminar el colegio quería ir. Entonces uno cuando se cumple un sueño o una meta entonces siente muy bien con uno mismo porque ha logrado algo que ha querido. Interview: Cañar, 21 June 2011.

<sup>314</sup> Aborita estoy así vuelta un poco triste porque no estoy trabajando. Y, o sea como que me da vergüenza con [la gente] mismo y con mi familia también, o sea que ya estudié pero no, no puedo trabajar. Interview: Cañar, 21 June 2011.

<sup>315</sup> Aborita mi hijo me necesita más y cuando está pequeñito puedo ayudarlo, luego ya o sea el ya poder defender así él solito. Entonces sí quiero estar por lo menos estos dos añitos de escuela por lo menos con él para que, para que o sea, para que él mismo ya, aborita mismo aun no sabe ni leer ni escribir. Recién está aprendiendo las vocales, recién está aprendiendo a contar, recién está aprendiendo los colores. Entonces todo eso es nuevo para él, tiene que adaptarse a la escuela. Y recién este año le han de hacer a aprender a escribir... Entonces eso yo así mismo igual conversamos con la Judit dije aborita estoy dedicada a mi hijo digo porque yo igual no estaba con él y aborita, aborita que tengo la oportunidad de estar con él. Entonces yo también siento que debo de estar con él porque y ya digo de más grandecito cuando ya aprenda a leer, aprenda a escribir ya me va a decir mami ya déjame, ya no quiero que estés. Entonces en cambio aborita sí necesita a veces, tiene así pruebas dice mami hazme estudiar, yo quiero que me hagas estudiar. Interview: Cañar, 21 June 2011.

Instead, she personally felt she needed to rebuild her bond with her child in order to feel confident as a mother again, besides feeling secure that she had provided him with all she could at this point in his life. This, however, conflicted with what she thought others expected of her as a university educated Cañari woman, leading to a feeling of embarrassment. In turn, this point is important as it indicates the significance given to the rising number of indigenous female professionals in Cañar.

Suyana possessed the strength to defy possible expectations of others over her occupational decision, but also acknowledged how this situation made her feel – embarrassed. The psychological battle here, therefore, could be extremely confusing. Additionally, Suyana commented how she would like to do a masters degree in the future. Yet she stated that jobs often require a minimum of three years’ experience. Without entering the labour market to gain experience, Suyana could find that her first degree would not be useful for a considerable time. This means that pursuing further education conflicts with both the labour market in her profession and her decision to stay at home. This raises questions over the potential psychological empowerment gained from earning a degree, versus the possible social hurdles and needs faced in motherhood alongside employment opportunities. Suyana noted that she had gained experience through working with the NGO in Chimborazo during her degree. While several projects had occurred in Cañar since, ‘due to my son, I have not taken advantage of, or looked for, that opportunity to get involved’.<sup>316</sup> Nonetheless, she recognised how she liked:

... sharing with others. I cannot say I know huge amounts. But I enjoy sharing a little of what I learnt, a little of what I know, and learning from them too. I like relating to people... I hope that this year or the next my son can manage more by himself, and I can get stuck back in.<sup>317</sup>

Suyana did not directly discuss the topic of empowerment in her interview. Yet she indicated facets of interpersonal empowerment while describing how she felt about potentially working in a *mestizo*-dominated environment when eventually looking for work:

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<sup>316</sup> ... verá aquí salieron algunos proyectos también pero yo por mi hijo o sea no he aprovechado ni buscado esa oportunidad a involucrarme. Interview: Cañar, 21 June 2011.

<sup>317</sup> ... más que todo compartir o sea yo no puedo decir que yo sé un montón. Pero sí me gusta así compartir un poco de lo que aprendí, un poco de lo que sé y yo también aprender de ellos, esto me gusta. Me gusta relacionarme con las personas. ojala dios quiera este año o el otro ya mi hijo se pueda desenvolver él también solito entonces ahí sí voy a, voy a meterme a fondo. Interview: Cañar, 21 June 2011.

*Mestizos* drive the majority of the milk industry. So I may well run into discrimination. I try not to give much interest to people who discriminate. Being indigenous means they think we're not capable. I have done all I can and nothing makes a difference. I haven't given them motivation to discriminate me. I always try to fulfil what is asked of me and they have no reason to discriminate. I have done my part, and I say, 'don't give them reason to believe that you are anything less, or incapable'.<sup>318</sup>

In essence, Suyana recognises that discrimination towards her is not about her personally, but about the person who is discriminatory. She anticipates having to fight against the patriarchy of the Hispanic culture. She does not deem her gender to be a problem so much as her ethnicity. Yet Suyana knows that she can only do what she is able to and she is aware of the likely pitfalls. She is prepared for the potential occurrence of bias based on her identity. Through her experiences she has found *power within* herself to face possible challenges, as her narrative demonstrates. Likewise, her motivation to work with other people shows her drive towards enabling *power with* others, particularly via knowledge generation built by her higher education. Although Suyana had decided to put her energy into motherhood, it is clear that her university education enabled processes of empowerment for her, which can be benefited from in the future.

### ***Nina***

Nina was born in 1984. She is the first of four children and has two sisters and one brother. When she was a small child her father worked on the coast, returning each month to Cañar. When Nina was eight years old, however, her father migrated to the USA. Although this was difficult for her family, she noted they were financially better off after he left. Likewise, although her father was physically absent, he always encouraged his children to study: 'my father's dream was always that his kids would study... so supporting us from a far, with him straining himself for us there, we

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<sup>318</sup> ... la mayoría de industrias lácteas, industrias cárnicas son indí--son industrias que son manejadas por mestizos. Entonces tal vez yo en el momento ahora me voy a tropezar con eso. No he tratado de dar mucho interés. Por ser indígena no creen que no somos capaces. He tomado como más fuerzas, y nada fortalece, he dado todo de mí, entonces yo no he dado motivos para que ellos me discrimine. Yo siempre he tratado de esto de cumplir siempre con lo que me piden, y o sea no tienen por qué discriminar. Yo por mi parte he hecho eso y ya digo, "no dar motivos para que, que la gente cree que uno es menos, o uno no puede". Interview: Cañar, 21 June 2011.



studied'.<sup>319</sup> Nina and her siblings went to college, although Nina is the only one who has gone to university.

For Nina, her mother has been her strength over many years, acting as an example and motivation to get a degree. Nina's mother did not receive an education because she worked as a cook on the hacienda. Later, her mother entered a literacy programme and learnt how to read and write. After her husband migrated, she became a literacy teacher and gave classes in her community. Nina explained how this helped her mother to find strength to deal with her domestic situation, which was a 'great example' for Nina.<sup>320</sup> She saw how her mother dealt with legal issues for Nina's grandparents due to the ability to converse in Spanish, while Nina would say, 'wow, how does she know so many things?'<sup>321</sup> Driven by this example, after Nina entered college, she began to prepare herself and focus on the possibility of going to university.

Nina began a degree at the University of Riobamba in business administration, but changed courses to international business later as she enjoyed the subject more. She was also aware that it was a new course and that there were no other indigenous people on it, meaning she foresaw potential employment opportunities. Nevertheless, she commented that life at university had been difficult, due to loneliness. Consequently, her mother visited her often and her father rang her from the USA to encourage her to keep studying. Going into her second year, Nina met her husband who was near graduation. They married quickly. In response, Nina's father no longer wanted to support her financially, which caused difficulties: 'some days I did what I could, I wouldn't have bus money, sometimes I didn't eat'.<sup>322</sup> Nina noted the support she received from university friends and her husband, who sometimes drew on his own knowledge to help with homework.

When Nina graduated she had three children. She was very proud of this fact, yet also expressed how difficult it had been, as her husband did not want to move to Riobamba to live and provide support to her while studying. When her first child was born in her seventh semester, she stated that 'my friends were one of the

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<sup>319</sup> ... siempre el sueño de mi padre era que estudien, que estudien todos... él nos apoyaba desde allá que estudiemos, que él está esforzándose por nosotros. Interview: Cañar, 3 July 2011.

<sup>320</sup> .. una gran, no sé, como un ejemplo. Interview: Cañar, 3 July 2011.

<sup>321</sup> ¡Guau! ¿Cómo sabe tantas cosas? Interview: Cañar, 3 July 2011.

<sup>322</sup> Entonces un día pues hacía lo posible a veces, no tenía para el pasaje, a veces me quedaba sin nada que comer

biggest help that I had during that time'. They would provide childcare in the afternoons in reciprocation for Nina preparing food for the group. If there was group work to be carried out, Nina would request that people go to her room so that she could look after her daughter too. If she needed to use the Internet cafe, Nina would wait until her daughter was asleep in the evening before going out. Thus, Nina found ways to balance motherhood and her studies to the best of her ability in the absence of her partner:

So I had to accommodate my schedule. Sometimes I'd do washing at night, or homework after arriving home at 10.30 p.m. from classes. But even then I had to make dinner and attend to my daughter, so sometimes I would be up until two or three in the morning doing everything.<sup>323</sup>

Nina therefore recognised how hard it was to juggle all her respective responsibilities. She noted it was her daughter that had 'suffered most, because I didn't have all the time to dedicate to her'.<sup>324</sup>

Things became even more difficult for Nina when she fell pregnant again in her ninth semester. Due to loneliness, she returned to Cañar every two weeks to visit her family and husband. Struggling to cope with the demands of her studies, daughter and pregnancy, however, Nina made the decision to leave her daughter in Cañar when her second child was born:

*Madre!* That was painful for me. Because I had to separate myself from my daughter, the one who was my first, whom I loved and who spent time with me... it was painful. I know I had my son at my side but my daughter was far away and I told myself "she needs me now". At times she called me, saying, "Mummy, when are you coming?" She would ring me crying sometimes...<sup>325</sup>

Nina visited her daughter frequently, organising her schedule to accommodate everything. She focused attention on finishing her studies quickly, sometimes not eating or sleeping. Nearing the end of her thesis, Nina fell pregnant a third time. Nina said:

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<sup>323</sup> *Entonces tenía que acomodar mi horario. Entonces a veces lavaba en la noche, tenía que lavar yo. Y a veces tenía que hacer tareas de una noche, y luego, yo llegaba a las diez y cuarto de la noche así o diez y media llegaba de clases. Pero en ese entonces yo tenía que, ya bueno, merendar y hacerle dormir a mi hija, y de ahí dedicarme a, en este caso a mis tareas, me quedaba hasta dos de la mañana, hasta tres de la mañana, haciendo las tareas.* Interview: Cañar, 3 July 2011.

<sup>324</sup> *Ella sufrió mas, y, porque no tenía o sea, todo el tiempo para dedicarme a mi hija.* Interview: Cañar, 3 July 2011.

<sup>325</sup> *Madre! Es doloroso. Porque tuve que separarme de mi hija la que más quería era la primera, la que mas o sea pasaba conmigo... era doloroso para mí, o sea yo sé que tenía a mi hijo a mi lado pero mi hija estaba lejos, decía "y ahora me necesita". A veces me llama, me dice "mami ¿Cuándo vienes?" Y llorando a veces me llamaba.* Interview: Cañar, 3 July 2011.

I could not believe it, “No, My God! No!” [informant cries]. I left my two children here for six months. My two kids here in Cañar. But the good thing was is that now they were together, and Maria didn’t miss me as much. Sometimes I said, “I’m going to take the little one”. My daughter didn’t want me to; “no, don’t take my brother, I need him”. So for that reason I didn’t take him with me, they both stayed here. So yes, it was quite difficult. I was able to finish the dissertation, I defended it with only two weeks until I gave birth...<sup>326</sup>

Despite the upheaval, Nina graduated two weeks after giving birth. She said graduating with her three children present ‘was the greatest happiness for me. My teachers also congratulated me; “you had the strength to study with three children, how??”’<sup>327</sup> Nina consequently received respect for her accomplishment from others.

Nina’s narrative demonstrates and reinforces the battle faced by young mothers at university, particularly for those living at a distance from family and without spousal support. It also raises the issue of birth control within indigenous communities, and the lack of power women have over their sexual health.<sup>328</sup> Nina was fully aware of the sacrifices she was forced to make regarding her relationship with her children as a result of leaving them in Cañar. Yet Nina did not give up and managed to keep going notwithstanding the difficulties faced, demonstrating her inner strength, perseverance and steadfastness. The lack of conjugal support she received is noteworthy, nonetheless, as had she had this, her situation may have been different. Likewise, she later found out that her husband had been unfaithful. This caused a lot of psychological distress. However, Nina knew she had made such an effort to finish her studies for her children and family, and that she was worth more than the treatment received from her husband. She was clearly aware of the abusive situation she was in and they separated for a year. Yet she struggled to regain her relationship later:

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<sup>326</sup> *Entonces yo no podía creer, decía “no, dios mío, no” [llorando]. Los dos se quedaron acá, pues mis dos hijos les dejé acá ya. Entonces seis meses, seis meses dejé. A mí a mis hijos aquí en Cañar los dos, pero bueno, lo bueno es que ya estaban los dos. Porque Maria ya no extrañaba ya mucho a su—en que a mí ya no extrañaba, entonces a veces yo decía “me voy a llevar al más pequeñito en este caso”. Entonces mi hija no quería, decía “no me lleves a mi niño, yo le necesito”. Entonces yo por eso no, no me atrevía a llevarle, entonces se quedaron los dos. Y bueno, sí era medio difícil. Pude terminar la tesis. Pude terminar, defendí la tesis faltando como dos semanas para dar a luz.* Interview: Cañar, 3 July 2011.

<sup>327</sup> *Que entonces eso era la mayor felicidad de mí, igual mis profesores también me felicitaron que tu tuviste la fuerza de estudiar con tres hijos dice ¿cómo?* Interview: Cañar, 3 July 2011.

<sup>328</sup> This was not a specific topic of discussion with women during interviews, although one participant commented on it being a ‘taboo’ subject that very few people considered (Interview: Alejandra, Cuenca, 15 June 2011).

Being a professional doesn't matter in the case of home life, because you are discriminated just as much, and are psychologically abused at times. And that is what hurts a woman the most, or at least for me...in my professional life, thank God I have opportunities, but I have had obstacles in my emotional life, going on for three years now, that I cannot overcome. The problems continue.<sup>329</sup>

Despite her domestic situation, Nina recognised that she was esteemed by her community and in public spheres as a consequence of obtaining a higher education. It is at home where her education has made little difference to her relationship.

Since graduating, Nina has undertaken significant public roles. In a political sense, Nina was a *Junta Vocal* at a parochial level in her community, responsible for making decisions concerning infrastructural works. She had also worked in the Department of Education and Culture at the Municipality, facilitating and training women in garment and dressmaking and baking, besides teaching about issues concerning health and Andean medicine. She was also the secretary to a women's organisation in her locality, through which she had developed projects breeding poultry. Additionally, she was working with a local, second level, indigenous organisation under the umbrella of the UPCCC, which covered all the parochial communities in her municipality. She was elected this organisation's vice-president in 2011, while also working Monday to Sunday in a Cañar *cantón* based Credit Saving Cooperative, and in the Junta on Saturdays. Despite these multifarious commitments, Nina wanted to dedicate more time to the women's group, indigenous organisation and Junta. This was particularly because the income earned from the latter was better and she preferred to be working at a local community level on a daily basis.

With what appeared to be a very busy and demanding life, I was curious as to how Nina thought she had become so involved in all these activities. Nina reflected upon her marriage as being the starting point to becoming involved in local politics:

...he [her husband] discriminates me and says "you aren't worth anything". I mean, he is telling me that I have no value, ... "you don't matter to me". At times I don't feel worth anything, but tell myself "yes, yes, yes, I am". But equally it still affects you psychologically... in my case, I think when you have a relational problem, that is the biggest strength you have because that

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<sup>329</sup> *El hecho de que tú seas profesional, eso no importa en este caso en los hogares porque, porque así seas profesional eres igual discriminada, igual eres a veces incluso maltratada psicológicamente. Y eso es lo que a una mujer le duele más o sea, menos a mí... gracias a dios oportunidades, he tenido obstáculos pero en mi vida sentimental casi, como va tres años, que no puedo no puedo superar.* Interview: Cañar, 3 July 2011.

is when you begin to wake up, you say “no”... and so at the root of fighting with my husband was when I began to go out. I began just there... I said, “no, I have to be something more, I have to overcome myself” – there I began to look for meetings, I began to participate in my community.<sup>330</sup>

Due to the fact that Nina felt her husband did not provide her with positive validation or reassurance on an interpersonal level, she was cognitively aware of the discrimination she was suffering. Nina was able to value herself while acknowledging the psychological pain she was in too. To help this she actively searched for communal interaction with others. In doing so, Nina received encouragement from the wider community, and other women invigorated her to fight against her situation:

And from there doors opened because, when I began to participate in some meetings, they elected me as Junta Vocal... That has been a great help for me because I have participated in various workshops and courses... a local female leader invited me to a workshop in Quito. She said, “no, don’t just be sat down, you should de-stress yourself, do something, if you’re at home and you shut yourself in, you suffocate yourself more. You have to go out so that you never show the men, you have to show them that yes you can, you have to show them who you are, that you’re strong”. So I began to go out like her... I go to my community and everyone greets me, they say “here comes Nina, she is like this”, and I am very friendly. And the same in my work, for example, people see me and say, “this highly-minded woman, she is a professional and everything”. But he [husband] looks at me; I mean as if I had said, “I won”.<sup>331</sup>

Nina also looked up to other women around her, who acted as examples of what she could achieve:

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<sup>330</sup> ... a veces él me discrimina, dice que “tú no vales para nada”... o sea, me está diciendo que yo no valgo nada, .... “a mí no me importa”... Yo a veces yo no me siento nada, pero yo digo “sí, sí, valgo sí”. Entonces, pero igual a veces sí afecta psicológicamente... pero en mi caso yo hablo, es cuando tú tienes problemas sentimentales yo pienso. Esa es la mayor fuerza que tú tienes porque ahí es que empiezas a despertarte dices “no”, ... entonces yo, cuando a raíz de que me peleé con mi esposo, es que yo empecé a salir. Empecé justo ahí empecé a salir, ... Yo digo “no, tengo que ser alguien más, tengo que superarme”, ten-ahí empecé a buscar reuniones, empecé a participar en mi comunidad, en las reuniones. Interview: Cañar, 3 July 2011.

<sup>331</sup> Y desde ahí se me abrieron las puertas porque, cuando empecé a participar en algunas reuniones, ahí me escogieron para la--lo que es para la vocal de la junta parroquial me escogieron ahí... Eso ha sido una gran ayuda para mí porque a veces he participado en varios talleres, en varios cursos... Una lideresa local mismo me invito a este taller en Quito. Ella mismo decía, “no estés sentada tienes que salir, debes des estresarte, haz algo, estés en la casa, te encierras, te sofocas más. Tienes que superarte, y mejor, nunca demuestras a los hombres, tienes que demostrarles que tu sí puedes, tienes que demostrarles que tú eres, tú eres fuerte”, me decía. Entonces ahí empecé a salir como ella.... Yo llego a mi comunidad y a mí me saludan, me dicen “ahí viene la Nina, ella es así”, y yo soy bien sociable con la gente. Y por ejemplo en mi trabajo igual, o sea a mí me ve la gente y me dice, “y esa mujer altiva, esa mujer ella es profesional y todo”. Pero él me ve y, o sea como que yo le digo “me gané”... Interview: Cañar, 3 July 2011.

So at the point you have relational problems of internal discrimination and in the family, from there I believe you begin to spring forth—for example, talking of my aunt... up until now she is a leader... she was the President of the Junta and I always used to look at her when I was younger and say, “where does find those things to do?”... I always admired her... nearly all her life she had marital problems because her husband always cheated on her. So I believe from there that strength begins to grow, in which you want to better yourself if you want to move forward...<sup>332</sup>

Nina’s narrative indicates that a dysfunctional relationship with a partner can act as starting point to participation in public spaces and leadership roles. Yet in order to do this, one needs to be cognitively aware that there is a way to overcome the problem and not remain marginalised. Thus, Nina experienced cognitive empowerment, followed by psychological empowerment via the value and recognition that others gave her. In turn, Nina’s situation led her to encourage other women she worked with.

For Nina, it appears community activities provided an outlet where she could inspire other women through her own personal experiences. She commented that she enjoyed public speaking, and what interested her most was ‘awakening the women... to encourage the women via my experience. I mean, I love that’.<sup>333</sup> She explained:

... I think that I vent myself, I say, “no, ladies we have to move forward”. At times I give them some examples.... the majority are nearly all much older than me in the group of women that I have. But even so, I say, “you have to, you have to advance, and if you can participate in a meeting, participate! If you can participate in a workshop, participate!” And yes, they have developed affection for me. For some reason they elected me as Vice-president of the organisation. So somehow my words are working.<sup>334</sup>

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<sup>332</sup> *Entonces a raíz de que tú tienes problemas sentimentales de discriminación interna y en la familia, desde ahí yo creo que empiezas a surgir yo pienso porque--.* Por ejemplo hablando de mi tía la que decía que siempre participa así como--. Hasta ahora mismo es una líder... ella era presidenta en la junta parroquial yo siempre de pequeña miraba a ella y decía “¿de dónde sacar esas cosas para hacer?”... Entonces yo siempre la admiraba a ella... casi toda su vida, problemas conyugales porque el esposo siempre le traicionaba. Entonces yo creo que desde ahí ya empieza a nacer esa fuerza de que tu quieres superarte si quieres seguir adelante. Interview: Cañar, 3 July 2011.

<sup>333</sup> *Despertar a las mujeres... para alentar a las mujeres lo que es de mi experiencia, o sea me encanta eso.* Interview: Cañar, 3 July 2011.

<sup>334</sup> ... yo pienso que así me desahogo, yo digo “no, que las mujeres tenemos que salir adelante”, y a veces yo les doy algún ejemplo... en el grupo de mujeres que tengo yo, la mayoría tiene casi ya edades avanzadas. Pero yo aún así yo les dice “tienen, tienen que avanzar, y si pueden participar en alguna reunión, participen! Si es que pueden participar en algún taller, pues, participen!” Entonces, como que sí, sí han llegado a tenerme un afecto bastante ahí el grupo de mujeres, y no sé por algo me han elegido también como vicepresidenta en la organización, entonces tal vez ya en este caso mis palabras estén llegando. Interview: Cañar, 3 July 2011.

Nina's attempt to inspire other women, especially elders, to become publicly active indicates a drive towards generating consciousness-raising through the telling of every day lived experiences. This has potential to create *power with* and collective empowerment. Further, Nina being elected to the role of Vice-president shows that the groups recognised her leadership qualities. Nina suggested that the reason she had been elected as *Junta Vocal* could have been because she was viewed as a professional and the only person to have gone to university: 'I think they saw that, because at times I have asked myself the same question! [Laughs] Why did they elect me?' Likewise, she said:

When I go to the communities, they invite me to meetings because I am a *Vocal*. I am always saying, "ladies you have to study, you have to continue forward". So maybe then they see me as an example. I now see many girls, for example from my community, who have begun to study, some in university. I believe that all women need someone in the community to act as an example to others. For me in my case it has been my grandmother, my mother, aunt and others.<sup>335</sup>

Consequently, Nina's university education has helped influence other women in Nina's vicinity. Her personal achievement has become a motivating resource for others. In general, Nina thought that women in her locality had begun to change:

I don't know about in other parishes, but little by little women are awakening. They are presenting themselves. Because before, maybe I would say, "husbands are here but do all they can to hamper your participation". But in [her area] there are various single women whose husbands are in the USA, so they take advantage of the situation in order to participate, in workshops, training... in the parish, the women's group is very different to any other meeting because you can talk, we are women so there is trust.<sup>336</sup>

Therefore, through the influence of migration, "women-only" groups have become more prevalent due to the reduced restrictions placed on women by husbands. In

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<sup>335</sup> *Cuando llego a las comunidades, como soy vocal de la junta parroquial, me invitan a algunas reuniones. Yo siempre estoy diciendo, "mujeres, tienen que estudiar, tienen que seguir adelante". Entonces tal vez uno, a uno ojala le ven como un ejemplo. Entonces ahora ya veo a muchas chicas, por ejemplo de mi comunidad, que esta había empezado a estudiar, algunas ya están en la universidad y, y así. Entonces yo creo que todas las mujeres que alguien en la comunidad sea una, una, y sirve el ejemplo para las demás. Entonces yo pienso así. Para mí, en mi caso, ha sido mi abuela y mi mami, mi tía y otras también.* Interview: Cañar, 3 July 2011.

<sup>336</sup> *... no sé en otros parroquias, o sea, sino poco a poco ya se están despertando. Están surgiendo. Porque antes, tal vez, quizás, como yo digo, "a veces los esposos están aquí pero", como digo, "a veces todo lo hacen obstaculizando más en este caso para que no puedas participar". Pero como es cuestión en [su parroquia], hay varias mujeres solas porque los esposos están en Estados Unidos, entonces ellas aprovechan esta situación para poder participar, en este caso en estos talleres, en estas capacitaciones, yo pienso... en la parroquia, el grupo de mujeres es de, o sea, es muy diferente a cualquier reunión, porque puedes conversar, somos mujeres entonces, hay una confianza.* Interview: Cañar, 3 July 2011.

turn, a space for communal engagement, listening and sharing, creates an environment where *power with* can be fostered amongst members.

Nina's story is complex. On the one hand, she appears to have multiple levels of empowerment. She is well educated, respected within her community, and has been elected to political positions in her locality. Her higher-level education has helped provide her with social and political empowerment. On the other hand, she suffers from discrimination in her marital relationship. Even so, Nina has used this as a source of strength, also looking up to other women who have kept going despite respective hardships. Becoming a community leader offered her a source of personal empowerment, particularly through interactions with other women. Becoming a leader could also, arguably, be a by-product of the discrimination felt from her husband. Within her personal life, her process of education has generated a series of challenges. This has the potential to undermine levels of interpersonal empowerment. This therefore reinforces that, while you can obtain a level of empowerment in certain areas of your life, it does not necessarily mean that empowerment flows throughout.

## ***Conclusion***

This chapter has provided insight into the lives of several professional Cañari women who have attained higher education degrees, and the processes and experiences that they encountered as part of that life event. To obtain a degree is a notable achievement, particularly when considering the history of discrimination that indigenous women formerly faced when trying to access formal education (see Chapter IV). Each of the narratives contained in this chapter are unique to the individual, yet there are several common themes that reappear within them. The most noticeable is the matter of familial influences and social networks, not only within the process of choosing to attend university in the first place, but also during the women's time studying away from home.

In many cases it was the woman's parents who influenced them to go to university. This was because they themselves were educated to some level, or because they were illiterate or had poor educational attainment, and witnessed the value that education had through others. For Julia and Suyana, whose parents gave little importance to education due to their own minimal study, it was through the



encouragement of others, notably extended family or friends, which helped them make the decision to go. Equally, in several cases, it was parents who guided their daughters towards a particular course subject. In Nuria's case, for example, the death of her father had a significant impact on what she decided to study, and she acknowledged that she followed closely in his footsteps. Thus, it can be argued that parents have acted as facilitators and motivators for the majority of these women in leading them to go to university. Once the decision had been made that they would go, those women that felt lost in choosing the course subject accessed alternative sources of advice, such as college teachers. In contrast, some already knew what they enjoyed as a consequence of prior education or knowledge of a particular profession, and pursued that avenue.

Once at university, it was seen that supportive parents continued to provide encouragement to daughters; sometimes sending food parcels to those studying in Cuenca. In light of economic constraints, this was considered important with respect to living away from home and parents showing their moral support to their children. On the other hand, for those women studying further away from Cañar and who had children, such as Suyana and Nina, distance was more problematic, especially when faced with deciding how to best care for their children and complete their studies. Access to family capital was more limited. In contrast, Alejandra and Nuria were closer to Cañar. Alejandra had access to familial networks in Cuenca to help with her daughter, while Nuria could leave her child in Cañar temporarily while going to Cuenca to study for graduation. Thus it appears that place of study either created advantages or disadvantages dependent on the individual's personal situation.

Other common themes in the chapter are domestic relationships, children and employment. Whereas Julia, Sisa and Giovanna did not meet a partner during university, graduating as single women without dependents and opportunity to undertake employment roles under their own steam, those that were married faced greater challenges. Even if they had support from their spouses to meet their goals and aspirations, they all recognised that having children had placed limitation on them in some capacity or another. Nina's narrative is particularly key in relation to how becoming higher educated did not create a happy home life, and in some respects, going to university generated conflicts within her private life and marriage.

Nonetheless, she used her experience to work with other women in a way that would help enable collective empowerment amongst others, who had encountered similar conjugal issues such as discrimination.

A repeated matter linked to university education was identity, and the feeling of inadequacy amongst women due to being indigenous. This was either prior to going, while studying, or later when looking for a job. Yet all those that commented on this also found a way to overcome it, proving themselves through their acquired skills to the dominant culture and being accepted, or working with indigenous people, sharing their knowledge gained and making their ethnicity an asset in this role. Sisa and Suyana, as examples, could utilise their identity to work with indigenous groups based on their language abilities and cultural understandings.

Equally, all accept Suyana had found a role or job within the wider community as a result of their university education. The reason Suyana had not was simply based on a personal decision as a mother at that time. Sisa and Giovanna appeared motivated and ambitious, yet their familial positions as older sisters alongside absent fathers contributed to feelings of responsibility for their younger siblings and the need to support their mother, besides providing economic support to their families. This may therefore impact on the professional decisions they make in the future, especially over the location of employment.

Ultimately, the processes through which these women went to achieve a degree have all entailed push and pull factors, positives and negatives, and multiple levels of empowerment alongside disempowerment at times, yet all the participants have accomplished their goals. Life events such as parental separation, marriage separation, separation through migration or death, are all uncontrollable issues but can have an impact on whether one succeeds or fails. In the narratives of the women here, it is demonstrated that those who have encountered such matters have found the *power to* keep moving forward, fulfil their dreams and become professionals. Creating *power within*, aided by attending university, also allows for *power with* others. These women here are acting as examples to the wider indigenous community, “breaking the rules” and helping other people around them to create their own aspirations and goals for the future. It is a cyclical process.

## **Chapter VI**

### **Cañari Women and Public Engagement**

The increased access to formal education and the acquirement of higher-level degrees by Cañari women, as discussed in Chapter V, clearly indicates that there are a growing number of dynamic and motivated young women living in the Cañari communities. However, Cañari women have been actively engaged in public spaces for many years, including within their own communities and local organisations, the larger indigenous movement at a regional and national level, in development organisations, as healers or health practitioners, or educationalists. Consequently, there exist numerous participants who provide noteworthy narratives for analysis in relation to processes and outcomes of empowerment for women in the geographical area under study. In addition to those already examined in the previous chapter, the accounts explored here highlight additional factors to take into consideration while investigating indigenous women's empowerment.

In many cases, the narratives outlined in this chapter refer directly to Cañari women's engagement in political structures, either locally or provincially, thus corresponding to assertions made by Palacios (2005) and Picq (2008) that women's political participation is more noticeable at parochial, municipal and provincial levels. Several exceptions, however, demonstrate involvement further afield, at a regional, national, and even international level. The purpose of this chapter is to explore the processes the participants went through in order to achieve their roles and positions, while also exploring factors that have facilitated their development. Equally, the chapter considers what the outcomes of these women's activities have been for them as individuals, and for the collective; either for women-only groups, or for the wider indigenous community.

The chapter is structured in the following way. Section 6.1 considers those women who have engaged with the indigenous organisation as leaders at multiple administrative levels. As part of this section, a brief overview of Ecuadorian indigenous women's participation, and the formation of women's groups in the indigenous movement, is provided. This discussion highlights a number of tensions existing between women and the male cohort of the organisation. This is relevant for discussion as it provides a context for narratives considered later in the chapter.

Also within section 6.1, a political leadership school is examined. This is significant: not only does it provide an example of how women have overcome some of the challenges faced inside the movement, it also demonstrates an example of a popular education programme that was established on the pedagogical principles of Monsignor Proaño and Freire by a Cañari woman. This woman's account is considered prior to the discussion about the school. Subsequently, the narrative of a Cañari woman who attended the school, in addition to undertaking various roles within the movement, is outlined. Thereafter, in section 6.2, the story of a native healer is considered first, which highlights an alternative method of participating within the movement, while also assuming leadership roles in Cañar. Subsequent narratives in this section concern women who have undertaken more local engagement in Cañar. These include a community nurse, a community leader / education director and legal adviser.

Within this chapter, factors such as familial history of leadership, conjugal relationships, children and education are highlighted, contributing to the development of empowerment for these respective women. The overall outcome of the women's life processes and experience of empowerment indicate the notion of women working together, or working towards the good of all, including men. Thus, by developing a sense of *power within*, they engage with courses of action to generate *power with* and *power to*.

### ***6.1 Cañari Women's Engagement with CONAIE and ECUARUNARI***

The participation of indigenous women in the indigenous movement in Ecuador has been widely researched (Garcés and CEDIME, 2010; Mendez, 2009; Pequeño, 2007; Prieto et al., 2005). What is relevant here, and to certain aspects of the data, is that, at times, women's involvement has been met with contestation from men. This has particularly been the case when more radical indigenous women have begun to question their role and claim their rights as women in the movement, in light of gender discrimination over decision-making processes and a lack of female participation in meetings (O'Connor, 2007; Palacios, 2005; Picq, 2008; Prieto et al., 2005; 2006). In response, a group of women leaders founded the first indigenous women's organisation in 1996, called the Consejo Nacional de Mujeres Indígenas del Ecuador (CONMIE). This provided a space where women could express themselves

(Mendez, 2009) as well as advance the rights of indigenous women (Picq, 2008: 284).<sup>337</sup> The fundamental idea behind CONMIE was to ‘initiate a process of strengthening women’s self-esteem and directly question certain male privileges’ (Prieto et al., 2005: 182). In addition to raising women’s awareness of their property rights in marriage and as widows (Deere and León, 2001b: 254), the organisation was also meant to ‘empower indigenous women and disseminate knowledge regarding the legal framework that protects women against violence’ (Figueroa, 2011: 353). This was emphasised by the following activist:

...many women participating in the feminist movement were gaining awareness of gender and of their rights. So they were a little cut off within CONAIE. They said, “well, we are here in CONAIE. We are going to leave here; we are trained, capable and we can create a National Congress of Indigenous Women... They began questioning the infidelity, the children that the culprits had left to some of these young girls... Well, in reality it was a fight for individual rights. Questioning actions carried out by the indigenous leaders, that they were not ethical, right? That the divorces were against women...”<sup>338</sup>

The women that began CONMIE went through a process of consciousness-raising prior to mobilising and organising themselves (Stromquist, 2002). Consequently, CONMIE aimed to promote awareness amongst larger numbers of indigenous women over gender inequalities and women’s rights. In doing so, CONMIE leaders were able to generate *power with* amongst women to achieve collective goals that challenged and altered the lack of female presence in private and public levels of the political space. They sought to reduce gender subordination in addition to expanding participation in decision-making processes. However, this group functioned with feminist underpinnings that undermined indigenous cultural philosophies, such as gender complementarity and collective solidarity. This led the movement - and more specifically the men therein - to react negatively and confront these women.

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<sup>337</sup> CONMIE is the National Council of Indigenous Women of Ecuador.

<sup>338</sup> ...muchas mujeres al participar en el movimiento feminista fueron adquiriendo conciencia de género y de sus derechos. Entonces, ellas han sido un poco troncadas dentro del Movimiento Indígena de la CONAIE. Dijeron, “bueno, nosotros aquí, está la CONAIE. Nosotros vamos a salirnos acá; nosotras somos formadas, capacitadas y podemos formar un Congreso Nacional de Mujeres Indígenas.... Y ellas que empezaron a cuestionar; empezaron cuestionando la infidelidad, los hijos que dejaban los indigentes a unas de esas chicas jovencitas. Bueno, en realidad era lucha por los derechos individuales. Entonces cuestionando las, las acciones que hacían, que no eran éticas, los líderes indígenas, ¿no? Entonces, que los divorcios que había que iban contra la mujer, contra mujer... Interview: Carmen, Quito, 19 July 2011.

The CONAIE claimed that the women's behaviour was dividing the movement and attempted to quash it. As Picq states, CONMIE was 'automatically perceived as a threat to the unity and strength of the indigenous movement and sparked tensions and accusations among the leadership of CONAIE, FEINE and Ecuarunari' (2008: 284). During an interview with Simbaña, Deere and León were told: "They [the men] said the idea of a women's organization wasn't an indigenous idea, that it was a copy of the *mestizas*" (2001: 254).<sup>339</sup> Picq writes:

After sustained harassment, intimidation, and threats to CONMIE's leadership, CONAIE came up with an offer: the women who abandoned CONMIE once and for all would be granted political power within CONAIE (2008: 284).<sup>340</sup>

When Carmen, an indigenous woman working within political structures interviewed in Quito, was asked to describe CONMIE and its work, she said:

I think they failed as a strategy. However, this organisation lives today, but it has not grown, because it has been very questioned... this organisation was in fact illegitimate. They began to talk and wrote letters to NGOs, as no one supported them, and in the end some women also left and returned to CONAIE... So this women's organisation did not grow because the CONAIE was also quite strong at that time and had a very consolidated

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<sup>339</sup> Andolina et al. argue that the interaction of indigenous women with Latin American feminism and women's movements, such as that in Ecuador, has been minimal (2009: 213). Not only is this partly down to discrimination against indigenous women by mestizas, but also because indigenous women who have been involved with feminist women's meetings usually left feeling their specific demands and concerns were not adequately considered, and consequently decided to 'create networks more fitting for debate and discussion on their specific gender and ethnic challenges' (Andolina et al., 2009: 213). One key concern of indigenous women related to the (western) feminist agenda is that it is more focused on strategic interests, rather than practical issues, and therefore 'divorces gender from other axes of social difference such as class and race or ethnicity' (2009: 214). Deere and León became aware of distrust among indigenous women towards feminists and their demands due to the fact that 'the women's movement is viewed as being concerned with only mestizo interests and as ignoring issues vital to indigenous women, such as the perpetuation of poverty and discrimination' (2001: 247-248).

<sup>340</sup> Nina Pacari and Blanca Chancoso are two women who accepted this, beginning a new political career path that focused on ethno-politics rather than topics related to gender (Picq, 2009). Deere and León note how indigenous women leaders often identify their primary interest as being the defence of the community (2001: 248). This is supported by many studies that document indigenous women as the protectors of ethnic identity and indigenous culture (Crain, 1996; Lentz, 1999; Radcliffe, 1997). Chancoso is documented to have told Deere and León that "indigenous women do not have their own demands, as women, for we are not separate from the people. Our indigenous people are exploited and discriminated against, and together with the people, we suffer this same discrimination" (2001: 247). Deere and León quoted Pacari and how she stated that, while she believed the goals of the women's organisation were important, it was not "prudent to separate ourselves and for us to go as indigenous women with the exclusive struggle of women, and on the other hand, the men with the struggle as peoples" (2001: 254). Thus, these are examples demonstrating how some of these women decided to make ethnic demands central to their search for inequality, rather than their gender rights as women.

structure. Obviously it said that if the women leaders left, they were dividing the organisation, dividing the CONAIE.<sup>341</sup>

A decade later, CONAIE had created a department that focuses on gender, ‘but continues to be very reticent of CONMIE’ (Picq, 2009: 134). The movement acknowledged the need for women’s participation, particularly visible through the creation of “women’s departments”, but the topic of gender inequality remains limited within their political agenda, while the focus is to represent a collective and gender complementary process to strengthen indigenous leadership and presence across the provinces. CONAIE’s department is called “Women and Family” (CONAIE, 2011), while the equivalent within ECUARUNARI is called *Dirigencia de la Mujer*. The difference between these and CONMIE has to do with ideological perspectives, in which the former focus on members working together to:

... identify the problems of women and the family and find solutions in a complementary manner between genders. The same coordination and information from the provinces, in coordination with the national organisation, will help the development of local and national activities, allowing knowledge generation to be combined in order to work towards the women’s goals (CONAIE, 2011).

It is evident that the indigenous movement in Ecuador has not suppressed the subject of women and their rights entirely. However, what appears to be key is the way in which work is carried out. Maintaining a focus on “working together”, from a perspective of complementarism between men and women, seems to resolve the issue of dividing the collective agenda, whereas CONMIE did not address women’s concerns from this angle. They addressed them from a more feminist perspective, causing tensions to arise inside the indigenous movement.

Nonetheless, as embodied individuals, indigenous women who wished to maintain their links to cultural identity, while also addressing discrimination, found an alternative pathway to do so within the movement. This was through a political leadership school for women, created by Asiri from Cañar. Asiri told me that she started the school due to the needs of indigenous women, ‘who could not shake off

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<sup>341</sup> ... yo pienso que fallaron como estrategia. Entonces, sin embargo, esta organización hasta ahora vive, pero no ha crecido, porque ha sido muy cuestionada... en realidad esta organización era, no era legítima. Entonces, empezaron a decir, escribieron cartas a las ONGs para que nadie las apoye y, en fin, y algunas mujeres fueron saliendo también de ahí para servir también sacrificadas y luego volvieron a la CONAIE... Entonces no creció esta organización de mujeres porque el, la CONAIE entonces, también en esa época era bastante fuerte, ¿no?, tenía mucha estructura consolidada y obviamente decir que si los dirigentes iban y las compañera están dividiendo la organización, están dividiendo la CONAIE. Interview: Quito, 19 July 2011.

the inability to speak, to go out, to participate. If they want to learn, if they want to go out, if they want to participate, the husbands don't let them'.<sup>342</sup> Rather than focusing solely on an agenda for women's rights, the school aimed to open up a space to engage indigenous women in the political scene, focusing on 'gender, ethnic, cultural and intergenerational inequalities' (Radcliffe et al., 2003: 395). For Figueroa, it represented the "inside path" of indigenous women who have decided to seek ways to empower themselves without challenging the masculine hegemony of the indigenous movement' (2011: 354). Before discussing the school, however, examining Asiri's narrative will provide insight into her own process of empowerment, and further background to why she decided to initiate the school.

### ***Asiri – An Indigenous Political Leader***

Born in 1957, Asiri is the younger sister to Willka and Flor (see Section 6.2). Through an arduous process to convince her father that she should obtain an education, Asiri went to Riobamba when she was fourteen to attend the Escuela Radiofónicas run by Monsignor Proaño.<sup>343</sup> There she finished college, never returning home. Her steadfastness in wanting to become educated and rebelling against her father's wishes demonstrates Asiri's capacity for challenging authority when necessary. She was the first Cañari woman to graduate with a *bachillerato*, clearly a significant achievement. She subsequently began studying medicine at the University of Cuenca, a difficult transition, due to the combined cost of living in Cuenca and buying university materials. After two years of study Asiri decided to marry; it seemed a better option. Marrying a *mestizo* man, an uncommon occurrence for indigenous people in Cañar, Asiri viewed her marriage as a way out of poverty.<sup>344</sup>

In 1984 Asiri was elected Secretary of the UPCCC, without having any prior

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<sup>342</sup> *Porque por las propias necesidades de las mujeres todavía, todavía no se sacuden a hablar, a salir, a participar. Si es que quieren aprender, quieren salir, quieren participar, los maridos no dejan.* Interview: Cañar, 2 July 2011.

<sup>343</sup> As one of her sisters had left school at the age of 15 to get married, Asiri's father refused to allow her to finish school, arguing that there was no point if all she was going to do was leave and get married. As such, Asiri never had any intention of getting married when she was younger, and instead her primary goal was to become educated. Asiri studied until fourth grade, when she was taken out of school, and raised livestock at home. Two years later she rebelled against her father and decided to go back to school, attending an institution run by nuns, with the support of her mother but not her father. Her father was very angry with them both when he found out she had returned to education. A priest intervened and spoke to her father; after that he allowed her to continue. Asiri finished sixth grade and then wished to go to college.

<sup>344</sup> Interview: Asiri, Cañar, 2 July 2011.



experience. She subsequently became the UPCCC leader without proficiency in this type of role either (Prieto, 1996). Simultaneously, Asiri belonged to a Cuenca-based organisation, Frente Amplio de Mujeres, where she interacted with the urban mestiza feminist movement and learnt about women's rights. Following this involvement Asiri wanted to organise women better in Cañar:

That group generated a lot of reflection; that women shouldn't be abused. To wake ourselves up, to organise, to succeed, learn, educate. With that experience I wanted to organise here. The UPCCC didn't allow us, stigmatising us as feminists. They said we were Trotskyists... but I ignored them. In 1984-85 we led great marches on 8 March and 1 May. We wanted to go to communities and organise, because it was very hard during that time for women to talk freely.<sup>345</sup>

Asiri highlights aspects of the discussion made above concerning internal dynamics within the indigenous movement, here, but in specific relation to Cañar. Asiri ignored the men's attitudes towards women's organising, however, and pursued what she had learnt in Cuenca. Through their activities, the Movimiento de Mujeres Trabajadoras Indígenas del Cañar within the UPCCC was established; a group of women who always participated in marches and meetings whenever possible: 'it was a great motivation, because 400 women from Cañar participated in the gathering and march we held. That was a motivation to continue forward'.<sup>346</sup>

Asiri, along with two other Cañari women (including Nuna, below), created the Comisión Coordinadora, which dedicated itself to organising Cañari women: 'we had to organise groups of women to begin to open their eyes'.<sup>347</sup> Thus by working together and generating consciousness-raising, Asiri and her *compañeras* began to work in mobilising women through "women-only" groups.

In 1986, Asiri was asked to attend the thirteenth congress of ECUARUNARI, where she was appointed director of the Women's Group within the organisation. She moved to Quito to undertake this role in March 1986, leaving her husband in Cuenca and children in Cañar (Prieto, 1996). The building blocks to

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<sup>345</sup> Desde ahí vengo con esto de que hay que reivindicar las mujeres. Este grupo había o sea millones de reflexión, de que las mujeres ya no el maltrato. Despertarnos, organizarnos, conseguir, aprender, educar. Y de ahí pues como esa experiencia yo quería organizar acá. Y acá en la UPCC no nos dejaron, nos tildaron de feministas. Y no, no se hizo caso, igual nos dije ya, que estén diciendo que soy feminista. Nos decían trosquistas... Pero bueno yo no hacía caso. En el 84-85 hacemos grandes marchas por el primero de mayo, el desfile. El uno de mayo, el ocho de marzo. Queríamos salir a comunidades a organizar grupos, porque era bien difícil en esos tiempos las mujeres no hablaban así libremente. Interview: Cañar, 2 July 2011.

<sup>346</sup> Asiri in interview with Prieto (1996: 2).

<sup>347</sup> Asiri in interview with Prieto (1996: 2).

her political career were reinforced at this point. As bilingual education appeared in the late 1980s, Asiri was selected and trained to be a teacher. She went to Riobamba for three months to receive tuition. Teaching in southern Cañar, Asiri was elected as Leader for Education in ECUARUNARI in the 1990s, and had to return to Quito to undertake this work. She also became a political adviser in the founding of the Movimiento de Unidad Plurinacional Pachacutik in 1995, and subsequently made a candidate for its presidency. She told me that this had little importance because political campaigns at that time required personal financial resources, which she did not then possess. In 1996, ancestral medicine had a revival at a national level and the Jambi Huasi (healing centre) was created in the UPCCC, where Asiri and her sister Flor (below) worked together as its directors.<sup>348</sup>

In the latter half of the 1990s, Asiri presented a proposal to UNIFEM relating to her work with indigenous women and received \$4000. With a total of \$9000 to use (the other part acquired from the Ayuda Popular Noruega, APN), she began activities related to topics such as health and environment. With the remaining money, she created the Escuela de Formación de Mujeres Líderes “Dolores Cacuango” (see below). In 2000 Asiri coordinated the establishment of regional Escuelas de Formación in various provinces; this was the ultimate vision of the school’s preliminary proposal put forward in the 1990s. Asiri later had to retire from these roles when she was called to the Ecuadorian Embassy in Lima by the Gutiérrez government. She explained:

Nina [Pacari] entered as the Foreign Minister and they looked for people for the Foreign Service and took me into consideration as a woman... I didn’t understand why the Pachacutik coordinator was calling me at 5 a.m. to say that I had been nominated to go to Peru, and if I was interested in working with women I had to be at the Ministry at 8 in the morning. I thought that Nina couldn’t go as a representative, and that I was delegated to go and give a workshop, a conference or something. It was a Sunday morning and it was the UPCCC Congress and they wanted me as a candidate for ECUARUNARI. Having been a leader, I said, “yes I am able to do it”, but now I couldn’t. I fell ill and was meant to travel to Quito in the evening. I went on the Tuesday instead, arriving at the Ministry at 8 exactly. I saw indigenous people in ties, mestizos, receiving a talk on protocol. At midday I asked what it was all for... The pay was tempting. Now I don’t earn in a year what I earned in a month! It was very good, which is why I could do it.<sup>349</sup>

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<sup>348</sup> Interview: Asiri, Cañar, 2 July 2011. The Jambi Huasi is the healing centre where Willka (below) runs her clinic.

<sup>349</sup> ... *entró la compañera Nina de canciller y buscó, cirnió a la gente para el servicio exterior. En eso me habían*

In Lima Asiri acted as first consulate secretary, focusing on cultural matters. She had to study new issues to understand things better, such as the Binational Plan Ecuador-Peru. She visited various places, including Cuzco and Huancavelica, meeting indigenous women and observing the formation of indigenous groups and organisations. Surprised at the lack of a national level organisation, Asiri made a proposal to the Embassy in which she wanted to link the indigenous leaders of Ecuador and Peru and carry out a programme on indigenous rights. Asiri enabled the creation of a technical commission to deal with such matters. She wanted to remain in Peru, as the money was so tempting, but decided to return to Ecuador in 2003 to reduce the risk of criticism back home, and being accused of being an opportunist and 'disloyal'.<sup>350</sup> Asiri said, 'because the State sent me, and not the provincial Pachacutik, that's the only reason they called me that... That's when there is leadership jealousy here, from men'.<sup>351</sup>

Besides *machismo* and tensions with male peers, Asiri encountered a number of issues upon return with people in the indigenous communities, caused particularly by her openness and honesty concerning individuals she believed were taking advantage of the organisation for personal benefit. She considered them as forming cliques, acting against her when nominated for leadership positions and requesting the ECUARUNARI president not to consider her for organisational roles.

Thereafter Asiri became involved in various small projects, and attempted to save a project focused on leadership formation in Cañar supported by the UPCCC and financed by Oxfam America. By the time she came to take over its coordination it was failing and eventually ended in 2005. In 2007 Asiri was selected to work on

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*tomado en cuenta como mujer y yo no entendí que el coordinador de Pachacuti a las cinco de la mañana me llama y dice, dice: Te han nombrado dice para que vayas a Perú y si te da para un--la cuestión de las mujeres y si te interesa estés a las ocho de la mañana aquí dice, en la cancillería con la doctora Nina, para que vayas a Perú. Pero yo pensé, como la doctora Nina ya no puede ir a las representaciones, pensé que me está delegando para dar una charla, una conferencia, lo que sea. Para eso ha de ser pensé. Era domingo de mañana y era el congreso de la UPCC. Me han querido candidata para el Ecuarunari. Yo ya era dirigente y todo, ahora sí, sí voy a poder, pero ahora no. Y me enfermo y domingo noche ya era de viajar a Quito. De ahí me voy el día martes. Yo que llego al al a la cancillería, ocho en punto. Veo uno que otro gente indígena de ahí puro corbata, . . . y corbata, gente mestiza recibiendo charla justo del protocolo. Y ya me siento pues a ver de qué se trata, después ya del medio día pregunto que como es que para que es. Ahí sí era tentado por el sueldo, ahora no gano en año eso lo que yo gano en un mes, era muy bueno, por eso podía hacer esto. Interview: Cañar, 2 July 2011.*

<sup>350</sup> ...que soy una traicionera, que una oportunista. Interview: Cañar, 2 July 2011.

<sup>351</sup> Sólo porque la nacional me mandó y no Pachacutik provincial y sólo por eso me dijeron que era una oportunista... Y después vienen los celos de liderazgos de aquí. De compañeros de aquí. Interview: Cañar, 2 July 2011.

gender issues with a development project called CoDesarrollo Cañar-Murcia.<sup>352</sup> After that she looked to find work, but encountered new problems because she did not have a higher-level education title, despite possessing the necessary experience for the respective occupations. The recently appointed national Director of Bilingual Education asked her to go to Quito, but Asiri turned it down as she no longer wanted to live in the capital. Instead, she took up teaching again in Cañar, while focusing on natural medicine and establishing a clinic at her home in the late 2000s.

Although she does not have a higher-education degree, it is indisputable that education has played a noteworthy role in Asiri's political empowerment and leadership processes in multiple ways. She has used education as a mechanism for political engagement via prominent positions within ECUARUNARI. On a personal level she has accessed varying arenas of learning (such as feminist groups), besides educating herself on relevant issues as part of her Foreign Service in Peru. This all demonstrates significant quantities of motivation and enthusiasm.

Given a leadership profile and trajectory of political engagement over two decades, I was curious as to where Asiri thought all her energy came from, especially to work with women. She said, 'I believe from the yearning I had to study... I think from that, from the poverty that there was'.<sup>353</sup> Asiri gave a long description of the activities she carried out as a child on the hacienda, helping in agriculture, explaining how there was often nothing to eat, and the lack of access women had to education. A desire to learn and become educated was clearly significant in her development at a political level, providing new opportunities as a consequence of increased awareness of women's rights. Equally, after agrarian reform, Asiri's father became leader of the San Rafael Cooperative, providing Asiri with an example of leadership and political involvement. While Asiri did not state this as a factor in her process of leadership formation, it is a noteworthy issue. Asiri reflected on the presence of her father during her childhood, commenting that her family was economically poor but spiritually rich due to him, whose knowledge of values and cosmology she still

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<sup>352</sup> This was a pilot project that aimed to contribute to the social and institutional development of home communities of immigrants (from Cañar), and the social and institutional development of immigrant destinations in Spain (specifically in Murcia). See Camps i Vidal et al. (2010) and López (2008) for an evaluation and analysis of this project. See Redrobán (2010) for further information on the gender element of this project that Asiri became involved with.

<sup>353</sup> *Yo creo que desde de las ganas que yo he tenido para estudiar... Yo creo que eso, de la pobreza ha hecho.* Interview: Cañar, 2 July 2011.

carries:

I enjoyed how my father would be around the fire with the candle, telling stories, legends, riddles. None of them were written down. I regret not recording them. Everything was spoken, nothing written. But now I realise that he left us with those values, those customs... Within politics, I am doing politics with health... our own ways of living and maintaining our own customs is also political...<sup>354</sup>

Despite initially not having her father's backing to get an education, her mother always supported Asiri in this regard. Yet Asiri lost her mother's economic aid when she married her husband, as her mother wished she married a respectable and prestigious man from Quilloac. Once again, this expresses Asiri's self-determination for her life, as she did not fulfil her mother's wish. Asiri stated that she had always had encouragement, autonomy and credence from her husband:

He has left me with freedom in everything, he has trusted me, my husband. Therefore, I know that in one hundred men, he is the one. Sometimes I say that had I married someone else, he might now be in Spain or the USA. I may have had more money but internally nothing. I don't regret getting married... I know that culturally there are clashes amongst society, not between us, but he ignores them and continues on... my parents said that he only married me to cause damage, to have children, or to cheat on me. But no. He has never been *machista*. He came every week. With four children, I was always washing buckets of clothes. As such I had no time to bathe the children, so he would fetch water from the wells in buckets, light a fire, which is hard to do, and heat the water in a pot to bath the kids.<sup>355</sup>

When reflecting on indigenous women's awareness of their rights and political participation today, Asiri commented:

If women aren't organised, they don't know their rights. Women have to be organised because it is in the organisation that we learn these things... We're not like before, when we asked permission to speak or hold a meeting.

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<sup>354</sup> *Me gustaba que mi papacito este en el fogón allí con la candela y ahí él iba contando las historias, las adivinanzas, los cuentos y eso no quedó escrito. Me arrepiento de no haber escrito. Todo fue oral, nada fue escrito. Pero ahora que me doy cuenta él nos dejó enseñando esos valores, esas costumbres... En la cuestión política yo estoy haciendo política con esto de la salud... nuestras propias formas de vivir y mantener nuestras propias costumbres también es política.* Interview: Cañar, 2 July 2011.

<sup>355</sup> *Todo me ha dejado en la libertad, me ha confiado, mi esposo. Por eso yo sé decir en cien hombres él es el uno. Y, quizás digo tal vez casándome tal vez con un otro, hubiera estado en España o en Estados Unidos, hubiera tenido más plata que sé yo. Pero, hecho o sea nada, interiormente nada. Y no me arrepiento de haberme casado... yo que sé, un cuestión cultural, hay choques. Pero él no hizo caso a esos choques, y siguió adelante. Pero sí hay choques, pero de la sociedad no de los dos... mi papacito mi mamacita mismo decía, cómo es chazo sólo unió conmigo para hacer daño o para tener hijos o que va a dejar, que me va a abortar. Pero no. Él, ha sido, él nunca fue machista. Él venía cada semana y, y yo sabía estar--abajo vivía--sabía estar lavando ropa tachos, cuatro hijos, tachos de ropa. Y ya no me alcanzaba ni para hacer bañar a esos hijos, y él cogía, no teníamos agua potable, él cogía los baldes, iba al pozo, traía al balde de agua, ponía la olla, prendía candela, fogón que es difícil prender.* Interview: Cañar, 2 July 2011.

Education comes first now..., there have been female authorities - female mayors, councillors.<sup>356</sup>

Asiri directly alluded to the need for women to work together to aid in consciousness-raising to alter their situation. I felt it appropriate to ask Asiri about the concept of empowerment and what it meant to her. The first thing she said was, 'I am already empowered. Empowerment is to empower yourself of something, to be something, to be someone, to be for everyone'.<sup>357</sup> This could be interpreted as Asiri recognising her own empowerment through her own strengths, which she in turn uses to help others, i.e. she acts as a facilitator for other women's empowerment. She uses her *power within*, to generate *power with* and *power to*. What is noteworthy here is that Asiri does not relate her understanding of empowerment to the idea of *power over*. Vis-à-vis her *compañeras*, she noted:

Previously we didn't know how to speak, we weren't able to raise our faces to the priest, men, no one. And now we are suggesting things, at least, we have realised how. So then, that word "empowerment" entered into our vocabulary well. There are communities where I have worked where there are good leaders. But they don't have a profile on a public political level.... I know I can say, "she is empowered, but empowered by who?" In order to give, orientate, drive their community, give their thoughts. I know what it's like to participate in meetings at CONAIE, ECUARUNARI and other courses where I have contacts that invite me. If they want to go, then go. But they don't want to. I am in the Ministry of Social Inclusion, and on Tuesday I cannot go because it means expenditure, and I don't want to go. I wanted a friend to go instead, but she won't. I mean, women have been restricted... By going out, you learn, by participating. You learn by doing. I believe she is a good leader in her community, but if you don't go out, don't learn, you won't stretch yourself further... I recognise leaders - I know, one by one, who can be one. I mean not just from here, but from far away, I know. 100 women leaders could meet, and I want those 100 leaders to have more understanding. But they themselves don't want to.<sup>358</sup>

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<sup>356</sup> *Si las mujeres no están organizadas, no saben de sus derechos. Las mujer tiene también que estar organizadas porque la organización aprendemos, esas cosas... ya no estamos como antes. Pedir permiso para hablar, pedir permiso para una reunión. Ahora la educación está primero, y la cuestión de ser autoridades, ha habido alcaldesas, concejales.* Interview: Cañar, 2 July 2011

<sup>357</sup> *Bueno, yo ya estoy empoderada. Empoderamiento de empoderarse de de algo. Ser, ser alguien, ser uno, pues ser para los demás.* Interview: Cañar, 2 July 2011.

<sup>358</sup> *... antes no hemos sabido poder hablar, no hemos sabido poder ni, ni alzar a ver la cara del sacerdote ni de los hombres ni de nadie, y ahora que estamos proponiendo ahora ya algo siquiera ya, ya nos hemos dado cuenta. Entonces ya, esa palabrita ya entró bien, en nuestro vocabulario. Hay unas comunidades que yo he trabajado que conozco, hay buenas líderes. Pero a nivel imagen política pública no tienen... digo yo sé decir ella ya está empoderada, pero ¿empoderada de quién? Para dar, para orientar, para conducir a su comunidad, para dar sus pensamientos. Y yo sé querer que participen para reuniones de la Conaie, del Ecuarunari, y otros cursos que tengo contactos que me invitan, que si quieren que vaya pero no quieren, no quieren salir. Y yo estoy en el consejo consultivo de MIES. Es el ministerio de inclusión social. Y, es martes y ya no puedo ir porque significa gastos y*

I detected a real sense of frustration from Asiri when she was talking about this matter concerning indigenous women's abilities and confidence in leadership. Asiri has been fortunate in that so many of her experiences, from childhood to obtaining an education, from marriage to the Foreign Service, have all contributed to her leadership qualities and public engagement in politics, besides enabling a significant understanding of society and self. Asiri clearly has a great level of empathy and awareness of issues affecting indigenous women in Ecuador, producing personal aspirations in regard to other indigenous women as a collective and wanting to share knowledge as widely as possible. This partly explains why she established the Escuela de Formación. More importantly, Asiri's course towards political empowerment has been a lifelong process; she said, 'until the last day of my life, I will lead a political life'.<sup>359</sup>

### ***The Escuela de Formación de Mujeres Líderes “Dolores Cacuango”***

In 1997, Asiri completed the establishment of the Escuela de Formación while elected as leader of the *Dirigencia de la Mujer* in ECUARUNARI. It was initially endorsed by the Consejo de Coordinación de las Mujeres Kichuwa del ECUARUNARI on 25 August 1996 (Mayo, 2011). As Gazzotti states, 'the school represents one of the novel initiatives that the social movements put in practice during the neoliberal decade of the nineties' (2007: 1).<sup>360</sup> Asiri explained that the school's main aim was to provide a formative experience for women.<sup>361</sup> Figueroa also considered it a 'micro-space of women's empowerment', in which anxious indigenous women, concerned with low female participation in organisational decision-making, generated an environment for mediation 'with male leaders in order to legitimize their rightful place for engaging in politics and discussing politics' (2011: 365).

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*no quiero, no quiero ir. Y quise que vaya una compañera, no quiere. Entonces una--o sea, la mujer, que ha sido cohibida, que ha sido, lo que sea. Saliendo se aprende, participando se aprende, haciendo se aprende. Y pero, tengo buen pensamiento de--soy buena líder en su comunidad, pero no sales más, no aprendes más, no amplías más... Yo conozco a las líderes que--yo conozco uno por uno quienes pueden ser. O sea aunque no de, de por acá, pero de más lejos yo conozco. Puede reunir a unas 100 mujeres líderes, y yo quiero que esas 100 mujeres líderes tuvieran más conocimientos. Pero no, no quieren ellas mismo. Interview: Cañar, 2 July 2011.*

<sup>359</sup> ... *basta el último día de mi vida yo he de, yo he de actuar en la vida política...* Interview: Cañar, 2 July 2011.

<sup>360</sup> Radcliffe et al. purport that ECUARUNARI train women in order to 'strengthen the Quichua cultural-linguistic group, since indigenous women are perceived as a "natural leadership"' (2003: 395).

<sup>361</sup> Interview: Cañar, 2 July 2011.

As noted, Asiri explained that the school initially began with funds she had acquired from UNIFEM. Thereafter, the APN financed it between 1998 and 2000, with additional resources continuing to come from UNIFEM (Andolina et al., 2009). Subsequently, IBIS in Denmark ‘stepped in to support female leadership training through this school’ (Andolina et al., 2009: 219).<sup>362</sup> During the initial years of its formation, international support was significant to ensure the school was technically and economically viable, besides providing the women with ‘a source of power and independence from indigenous male leaders’ (Figuerola, 2011: 371).<sup>363</sup>

Between 1997 and 2002, the courses and workshops provided by the School were not systematically evaluated (Figuerola, 2011), unlike the educational proposal:

... inspired by the fundamentals and practices developed by the recognized Brazilian educationalist, Paulo Freire, and in the mission exercise of the Bishop of Indians, Monsignor Leonidas Proaño, Bishop of Riobamba. The Dolores Cacuango School capitalized on the lessons generated by these popular education icons in Latin America and enriched the self-criticism and methodological reading carried out starting from its only educational practice (Mayo, 2011: 19-20).

This helps to demonstrate how Proaño’s teaching methods influenced Asiri in her future activities. Remembering her narrative above, Asiri explained how she went to study in Riobamba with Proaño to complete college.

Given its pedagogical basis, the school is clearly designed to act outside of formal education and consequently falls under the category of an NFE/popular education programme. In order to meet the objective of increasing women’s leadership skills, training is carried out that focuses on the recuperation, elaboration and increase of knowledge. Here, the Spanish word ‘*conocimiento*’ is used for the word ‘knowledge’, through which the school lists several types of knowledge generation to aid in its work. These include knowledge that:

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<sup>362</sup> Radcliffe et al. (2003: 396) note that bilateral agencies, particularly in Scandinavia and the Netherlands, have ‘historically advocated gender frameworks based on notions of empowerment’. Figuerola (2011: 368) states that APN and IBIS supported Asiri when she was first elected as leader of the Secretariat of Women in Ecuarrunari.

<sup>363</sup> This latter point here reflects the comment made in Section 6.1, concerning how women believed funds designated to women’s projects did not get used properly by CONAIE. I was told that in recent years, the school has begun to run into financial trouble, as the NGOs that previously helped finance it removed their funding. I did not establish the reason for this, but was told that the leader of ECUARUNARI at the time of fieldwork had a different attitude towards the school than the previous leader. Consequently, ECUARUNARI was limiting funds to help support the programme (Interview: Rosa, Quito, 20 July 2011).



- Creates dialogue and strengthens individual and community identity within students
- Produces creativity and analysis in leaders
- Strengthens ethics, shaping the sharing of knowledge that encourages a focus on the world and life
- Exercises tolerance and the construction of economic, intercultural, interethnic, gender and intergenerational equity (MujerKichua, 2005).

Initially the curriculum was composed of three principal themes and modules: development management, politics and organisation, and identity and culture (MujerKichua, 2005). Its aim was to contribute to ECUARUNARI's political goals of reconstructing and reconstituting their indigenous identity (Figueroa, 2011: 369).

The teaching method for learning was through explanations given by a 'facilitator', either male or female, who was usually a member of the indigenous movement. Workshops requiring collective reflection and practical tasks, such as carrying out self-assessments, were also part of the curriculum (MujerKichua, 2005). Study was (and still is) through 'blended learning', or '*semipresencial*', over a period of three years, through which there were two basic levels to complete. These involved six seminary workshops, totalling twenty hours, and one specialised level where students chose a specific theme to focus on (MujerKichua, 2005). More recently, this teaching format has changed and it is now referred to as a 'pedagogical guide', which came about as a result of a diagnosis carried out concerning how it was possible for the school to grow and develop its effectiveness.<sup>364</sup> The guides are given to the students, and there are seven fundamental basic topics that combine everything that has been discussed during previous school years.<sup>365</sup>

Attendance is voluntary, but there is an exam to pass each level, with minimum attendance of 65 per cent on each course. The school's Academic Council carries out evaluations of each student (MujerKichua, 2005). Asiri told me students

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<sup>364</sup> The diagnosis that Rosa refers to here may have been the external evaluation carried out by IBIS and APN, highlighted by Figueroa (2011: 372). The evaluation occurred as many students had begun to consider it as an alternative method of formal education, hoping to be given an official primary education certificate. The school therefore had to be assessed to clarify its purpose as a school for political training. Zhingri (2005b) provides a sample of the written evaluation by IBIS and APN, in which it is stated that 'the school is an important component for the consolidation of ECUARUNARI and the identity construction of women in those spaces'. Zhingri (2005b) gives an overview of the results and impacts of the school based on past and present students, leaders and facilitators.

<sup>365</sup> Interview: Rosa, Quito, 20 July 2011.

‘graduate’ in the third year with a certificate of Diploma.<sup>366</sup> The school’s leader in 2011 commented: ‘Of course we don’t graduate with a degree that gives us a job, but we receive a degree as if we were to say, from the university of life, where one learns by doing’.<sup>367</sup>

The school therefore appears to have a reasonably developed structure in place for its teaching and objectives, but is clearly not recognised by the state as providing formal education. In order to attend the school, students are designated by their communities and local organisations to join, and must be individually endorsed by the provincial organisation where one exists. In the case of Cañar, this would be the UPCCC. Other pre-requisites include the need for women to have been involved in organisational work, with experience in a leadership capacity or showing a high interest in the organisation and a natural ability to lead (MujerKichua, 2005):

Here we bring *compañeras* from provinces. We bring them with endorsement from the organisations, because here you cannot come without passing through a process in your province, in your organisation. You have to come prepared so that you can improve further here.<sup>368</sup>

There appears to be an irony here. The school trains ‘women leaders in the indigenous and peasant organisations affiliated with ECUARUNARI. Leaders who can recognise their history, origins and identity; trained and committed to constructing and reconstructing their history’ (MujerKichua, 2005). To attend the school, however, you must have a level of leadership already established, or show a willingness to lead, which potentially excludes a percentage of women who may wish to do so but do not have the confidence to participate yet in that capacity. It could be argued that it is the latter population to whom this programme and avenue of training and education could be most beneficial. The selection methodology at the time of research sounded as if it excluded a proportion of the female indigenous population, as the programme was not accessible by every woman. It thereby discriminates against individuals who may like the idea of becoming a leader, but who do not have prior access to avenues towards leadership.

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<sup>366</sup> Interview: Cañar, 2 July 2011

<sup>367</sup> *Claro que no nos graduamos de, con un título que nos dé trabajo no, pero hemos, sacamos un título como decir la universidad de la vida, uno donde se aprende, uno donde que se hace y se aprende.* Interview, Cañar, 02 July 2011.

<sup>368</sup> *Nosotros a las compañeras traemos de provincias, traemos con aval de las organizaciones porque acá no puede venir una compañera que no ha pasado por proceso de su provincia, de su organización. Tiene que venir preparada para que aquí haya aun más avance.* Interview: Rosa, Quito, 20 July 2011.

On the other hand, Laurie et al. observe how programmes such as the Escuela de Formación are becoming more formalised under ethnodevelopment, meaning that popular education and training programmes often appear just as formal as university courses. They state:

... many training courses run curricula that are more flexible than university programs, comprising distance learning, workshops, seminars and short residential courses... These training programmes therefore resemble formal educational spaces but, unlike state-sponsored education, their curricula are shaped by the agendas of indigenous movements (2005: 84-85).<sup>369</sup>

As Laurie et al. noted: ‘in some cases, women have opted for the ECUARUNARI women’s training programme after finding that their needs were not met by standard university education’ (2005: 85). They suggest this could be due to the flexibility that these kinds of training programmes offer to women who have ‘the double/triple burden in community, domestic and paid work’ (2005: 85). The school’s necessity to establish a ‘criteria for pre-selection’ (Figueroa, 2011: 373) could also be linked to the issue of people viewing it as an avenue for obtaining a primary education (see footnote no.365). This was not its function; hence the need to create entry requirements based on individual’s leadership qualities rather than educational achievement.

Nonetheless, if such programmes are sometimes considered an alternative avenue towards higher education, it indicates that participants involved in NFE programmes may already have a significant level of academic ability. Returning to the matter of NFE as a source of generating female empowerment (Chapter II), one key issue here concerns the level of educational attainment, or literacy at least, of individuals upon entering. Thus, it is questionable to what extent some NFE/popular education programmes such as this school are accessible to a wider range of indigenous women. For example, would indigenous leaders, recognised in their communities, but illiterate, be able to attend? The answer to this in context to the Escuela de Formación is indeed yes, as after formalising its goals, ‘the School accepted illiterate and literate women alike’ (Figueroa, 2011: 373). However, the

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<sup>369</sup> In turn, programmes such as these involve engagement with the ‘latest development thinking while seeking to strengthen indigenous identity and organizing power through curricula that cover old and new topics as well as deploying empowering Freire-type teaching methods’ (2005: 85).

issue over access if one is not already considered “a leader” could be a contentious matter. It also raises questions over processes of becoming “politically empowered”.

Rosa is one research participant who attended the school.<sup>370</sup> At the time of interview, she was leading the ECUARUNARI women’s group. It was prior to obtaining this position that Rosa was a student here. She said: ‘I dedicated myself because the *compañeras* were there, and so I said, “well I too want to prepare myself more, train myself more, because what I have does not serve me much more. Thus, I still lack training”’.<sup>371</sup> This indicates that past and current students act as examples to prospective others, as Rosa saw her peers participating and she wished to do the same, meaning the school helped to motivate women leaders further:

So I came and I asked... They told me to come with the endorsement of the organisation. I came with that endorsement to this political training school, they explained to me what I had to do. They told me that if I had been a leader, I already had experience. I told them “yes, I have experience, but not in this style. I have experience of another style”. As in the organisation there was no money, nothing, only to organise. But the incentive, the proposal, was to gather women together.<sup>372</sup>

The type of previous leadership experience that Rosa had did not seem to matter; only the organisational endorsement was of real significance, as it would show an aptitude for political empowerment already bestowed:

So I came to the school. Here I learnt. I learnt a little bit more about how to make the role of women visible because there was no agenda in the organisations. In other words, there wasn’t an agenda topic concerning women in the meetings. The women were left alone, without agenda, nothing, nothing, nothing.... So we investigated, we asked, how is it in our own organisation? We were successful in saying that the women also have points, strategies to try things.<sup>373</sup>

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<sup>370</sup> Rosa is not Cañari, but is an indigenous woman from a northern highland province in Ecuador.

<sup>371</sup> *Yo me dediqué porque las compañeras ya estaban ahí, entonces yo dije “bueno yo también quiero formarme más, capacitarme más, porque lo que tengo no me sirve todavía de mucho más. Aún me falta todavía capacitarme”*. Interview: Quito, 20 July 2011.

<sup>372</sup> *Entonces vine, pregunté, entonces me dieron acceso a las antiguas dirigentas. Me dijeron que venga con el aval de la organización. Vine con el aval de mi organización a esta escuela de formación política, me explicaron qué tengo que hacer, cómo tengo que hacer, me dijeron si es que ya he sido dirigente, ya tengo experiencia. Y yo le dije que sí. Tengo experiencia, pero no así en este estilo. Tengo experiencia en otro estilo, porque en organización no había plata, no había nada, solamente hacía organizar, pero la incentivación, el propósito era de juntar a las mujeres*. Interview: Quito, 20 July 2011.

<sup>373</sup> *Entonces, vine a la escuela, todo eso. Entonces aquí aprendí en la escuela. Aprendí un poco más a visibilizar el rol de las mujeres porque así en las organizaciones no había agenda, o sea el tema de agenda de las mujeres en las reuniones, no había, sino que solamente era un mezclado nada más. Solamente las mujeres así, sin agenda, nada, nada, nada*. Interview: Quito, 20 July 2011.

The experience Rosa had, and the skills acquired and developed as a consequence of her time at the school, increased the leadership responsibilities she was given later. This reinforces how the school's objectives, structured within a Freire-like ideology of popular education, functioned not only towards the benefit of individual women, but for the wider indigenous collective:

We were able to influence, to propose, go into depth with women, and put the topic of gender to be addressed in the organisations. In stopping violence, in organisational leadership, in the economic and cultural sphere. We established the topic of women. So what I learnt here, I went and applied in the organisations. I went and said to my *compañeras* that we too had to broadcast to the rest of the women. As such, we have been advancing a little. So this political training school I believe has had an important role here in the ECUARUNARI. Female leaders after female leaders.<sup>374</sup>

While Rosa was attending the school, she went on an exchange to the World Social Forum in Venezuela, where she learnt that the issues arising for indigenous women in Ecuador were similar to those affecting women worldwide. In conjunction with the knowledge acquired through the school, the experience and realisations she made in the Forum opened up new opportunities. She graduated from the school and was subsequently made the school's Vice-president. She said:

Likewise, after that, I also learnt a lot more. I learnt where most women are, where they are most organised, where they are weak. Thus with all this vision, and learning, I said, "look, here it is a little more advanced. Here it is lacking, there it is lacking". So then, little by little we located where we had to create a greater unity, in order to make a great conglomerate, in order to make a great women's organisation at a national level... After all this, I returned to the school, where they named me the Women's President here in ECUARUNARI, and I have directed the Dolores Cacuango School.<sup>375</sup>

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<sup>374</sup> *Entonces averiguamos, preguntamos, como es de nuestra propia organización, venimos a preguntar. Entonces nosotros logramos decir que las mujeres también tenemos puntos, estrategias de tratar. Logramos incidir, logramos proponer, logramos profundizar y poner en las organizaciones el tema a tratarse de las mujeres. En la no violencia, en el liderazgo organizativo, en el ente económico, cultural. Logramos que el tema de las mujeres... Entonces lo que aprendí aquí, iba yo a aplicar en las organizaciones. Iba a decir a mis compañeras mujeres de que también teníamos también a las demás mujeres, difundir. Entonces, así hemos ido un poco avanzando. Entonces en la cual esta escuela de formación política... yo creo que ha hecho un papel muy importante aquí en la, aquí en el ECUARUNARI. Y dirigentas tras dirigentas.* Interview: Quito, 20 July 2011.

<sup>375</sup> *Entonces después de eso, también aprendí asimismo otro poco más. Aprendí que las mujeres -- en donde está más, en donde está más organizado, y en donde están medio débil. Entonces ya como con toda esta visión, con todo este aprendizaje, dije "Verá, acá está un poco más avanzado. Acá falta, acá falta y acá falta". Fuimos así poniendo poco, poco, poco poniendo en donde tenemos que hacer, para hacer una gran unidad, para hacer un gran conglomerado, para hacer una gran, una gran organización de mujeres a nivel nacional...después de eso allí vuelta ya. Me nombran de, me nombran de dirigente de las mujeres aquí en la ECUARUNARI y he dirigido la escuela Dolores Cacuango.* Interview: Quito, 20 July 2011.

As a consequence of her trajectory, Rosa says she now feels stronger, because before she could not talk in public, nor did she know how to respond to people when asked a question: ‘I was embarrassed to sit at the front as I didn’t know how to respond. I was better sat behind, so they didn’t ask me. But this process has strengthened me so that I can talk in public, I can talk with the women, with authorities’.<sup>376</sup> Along these lines, in an interview with Blanca Chancoso, Burch notes how women who had attended the school demonstrated an increased level of self-esteem and had lost the fear to talk in public, supporting Rosa’s claim above; ‘They formulate their own approaches and proposals’ (2007: 34).<sup>377</sup> Additionally, Chancoso was quoted as saying:

Some [students] have assumed leadership of provincial and community organisations, others have presented as election candidates, and inclusively have assumed as local authorities. In fact, the schools achievements have been a motivation within ECUARUNARI to boost leadership training in general (Burch, 2007: 34).<sup>378</sup>

In summary, focusing on the goal of consciousness-raising in women as leaders, Asiri’s creation of the Escuela de Formación at a regional level allowed a space for indigenous women to come together to discuss issues pertaining to both themselves as females, as well as members of the indigenous collective. This methodology thereby reduced the conflict within the indigenous movement; indigenous women leaders became viewed as a complement rather than a challenge. Moreover, men were present as course facilitators, emphasising the cultural ideology of complementarism and the need for cooperation between both genders in order to function successfully. Women involved in the school also appear to benefit on a

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<sup>376</sup> ... *me daba vergüenza sentar adelante porque como no sé qué responder. Entonces yo mejor atrasito y no más, para que no me pregunten. Entonces pero este proceso me ha dado esta fortaleza que puedo hablar al público, puedo hablar con las mujeres, con autoridades.* Interview: Quito, 20 July 2011.

<sup>377</sup> Chancoso was the leader of the school in 2007.

<sup>378</sup> Due to the school’s success, ECUARUNARI also developed a similar project aimed at young people and leadership, but this time it was for both genders. One of the primary objectives of the Escuela de Jóvenes was to train youngsters in order for them to participate at a political level within the indigenous organisation in the future. There is a fear within the organisations that the younger generations are losing familiarity with their ethnic history and the history of the indigenous movement, particularly as a consequence of migration and the effect this has on indigenous communities. The school also aimed to enable participants to take back what they had discussed and learnt to their local communities, and work with young people on the same topics at a communal level (Zhingri, 2005a). Giovanna from Cañar (see Chapter V) attended this school.

personal level, meaning not only is collective empowerment generated but also individual.

Operating within the political framework of the indigenous movement, and not outside it, gives the school credibility. The teaching and “knowledge” generated by the curriculum had a bottom-up approach, corresponding with the foundations of ethnodevelopment, and required students to analyse and reflect on specific subjects and their own experiences. By permitting students to develop their leadership qualities, in addition to discussing and recognising conditions faced by indigenous women, the school relates to the various elements that Stromquist (1995) associates with empowerment. It aids in helping women to boost their cognitive empowerment, besides collectively realising they have the capacity to act at both a societal and personal level to create “change”. The school clearly contributes significantly to women’s political processes of empowerment, but the extent to which it generates economic empowerment can be debated. It has the potential, however, to provide skills to its students that they can then take away to use in their communities and lead groups towards income generation. Therefore, the ability to have financial autonomy in this context does not seem to have the highest priority. Nonetheless, the objective that Asiri had when the school first began appears to have come to fruition, as it has benefited many indigenous women in their leadership skills and public engagement within their communities and the indigenous organisation.

### ***Nuna – An Indigenous Political Leader***

Nuna is one Cañari woman who attended the Escuela de Formación. Born in 1949 during the hacienda period in Quilloac, Nuna is the eldest of four children. She completed fourth grade of primary school, subsequently finishing her primary schooling as an adult through the help of a literacy programme via the Catholic Church. As a youngster, once removed from school to help her parents in agricultural work around the age of ten, she also worked serving the Church for many years. Here she was taught about liberation theology, which she found very interesting. It laid:

... a foundation of my heart, of what I’m like, in order to perform ...  
liberation theology taught that all human beings have rights. Right to life,

right to expression, to have education, to have health. Everything. As such, we [women] begin realising how our lives should be.<sup>379</sup>

Prior to agrarian reform, Nuna created a cultural centre with other young women in her vicinity. The idea was to generate a form of subsistence work. Post-agrarian reform, they organised with women from different villages to make clothes. Nuna was the youngest member of the centre's group and was elected as the organisation's treasurer and president. Over time they organised with groups from other communities; 'united altogether as women. That was our life experience'.<sup>380</sup> Nuna consequently began to engage and organise with other women while a teenager, aiming to improve their lives, especially economically. Politically speaking, Nuna explained to me what it was like for women to participate in the community after agrarian reform:

It was still hard. I remember we had to have a community assembly. The majority of women used to participate, but in one gathering, there were many young girls. They were removed because they were not allowed in the meeting. After so many years of being dominated, we thought women were only for the home. Women weren't considered as the right arm in ideological support, politics and organisational matters. So it was hard. We had to confront, fight, and discuss things through training workshops, through seminars... Little by little women gained freedom...<sup>381</sup>

Nuna commented on how her experiences within the Catholic Church taught her about organisational processes, and that she had an inner spirit that made her want to work with indigenous organisations, particularly with indigenous women. Her aspiration when she was younger was that:

... all women know what the organisation is, what politics is, what education is, what it means to "live well"... I hoped that all women would have a big heart to organise themselves, defend themselves from what we had lived. To protest, talk together, to speak, discuss, be able to do something, to arrive at

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<sup>379</sup> ...un fundamento a mi corazón, a mi forma de ser, para poder desempeñar... teología de la liberación fue así de entender todos ser humanos todos tienen derecho. Derecho a tener vida, tener expresión, tener educación, tener salud. Todo todo. Entonces ahí nosotros vamos dándose cuenta como tiene que ser nuestra vida. Interview: Cañar, 7 July 2011

<sup>380</sup> ...así unidas todas las compañeras. Eso era nuestra experiencia de vida. Interview: Cañar, 7 July 2011.

<sup>381</sup> ...era duro también, duro. Las mujeres yo recuerdo que teníamos que tener una asamblea. Asamblea de comunal. Entonces sabían participar mayoría las mujeres. Entonces uno de esos se habían participado más jovencitas. Ahí le mandaban sacando a ellas, porque no, o sea porque ellas no se puede estar en la reunión... con tantos años de gobernación, pensábamos que la mujer es sólo servicio, de la carga. No pensaron que la mujer es un brazo derecho para un apoyo ideológico, político, organizativo... Entonces eso fue duro, tocó de enfrentar, luchar, conversar mediante cosas de capacitaciones, mediante seminarios... poco a poco se fue llegando a la libertad de la mujer. Interview: Cañar, 7 July 2011.



living in harmony. So that was the idea I had, that the women know everything...<sup>382</sup>

Nuna's enthusiasm was evidently recognised by others within her community, as she said:

So with this excitement, with this spirit, I kept being nominated to be president, treasurer. I did anything, they kept nominating me. I didn't sit still. I kept accepting roles. I kept working with a lot of worry, thinking, 'don't get left behind, keep moving forward'. Other women told me that too. They performed as secretaries, presidents, *Vocales*, thus the women were encouraging. For me it was all very exciting. They all listened and carried out tasks, they began to understand and be motivated.<sup>383</sup>

Through the encouragement of others, Nuna undertook a number of roles in Quilloac over the following years, being the *comuna* treasurer, in addition to cooperative secretary, treasurer and leader. She therefore crossed between the two communal entities. She was also nominated to be coordinator of the UPCCC, a position held for four years, during which time she focused her efforts with women in provincial parishes. She continued to take treasury roles for many years, serving various groups in Cañar, while maintaining her work with women, particularly regarding health and education.

Nuna was elected as the first leader of the Women's Group within CONAIE for a two year term, where she was able to organise women on a larger political scale. She mounted training courses in health and traditional medicine. I asked her how she had come to obtain this position within the CONAIE:

I'd been here [Cañar] in the sixties, working and coordinating women, CONAIE later appeared and I entered as coordinator, but I entered with support from here with other women. It wasn't just me. As we knew how to participate in congresses, I enjoyed chatting with women, exchanging experiences, in health, in *artesanía*. I enjoyed getting to know other women, their realities, the activities that they carried out so that we could copy them. Therefore the UPCCC delegated me to participate in the first CONAIE Congress. There were ten women that went from the UPCCC. I had never

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<sup>382</sup> ... todas las mujeres que sepan cómo como los hombres. Sepan que es la organización, que es política, que es educación, que es un buen vivir... Ojala todas compañeras tengan un corazón grande de organizarse defenderse de lo que hemos vivido. Cómo defenderse; reclamando, conversando, dialogando, discutiendo, puede llegar a hacerlo, llegar a vivir en armonía así. Entonces eso era mi idea, con las mujeres sepan todo... Interview: Cañar, 7 July 2011.

<sup>383</sup> Entonces con esa emoción, con ese espíritu yo cuando--me seguían nombrando, yo que sé presidenta hacía tesorera hacía cualquier cosa seguían nombrando. No me quedaba. Me--decía igual otras compañeras iguales. Ya van--iban desempeñando de ser secretaria de ser presidenta de ser vocales así las mujeres fueron animando. Ahí sí para mí era muy emocionante. Todo escuchaba y todos que desempeñe y todo los que iban conociendo y todos que vayan asumiendo. Interview: Cañar, 7 July 2011.

dreamt that I would be leader of the Women's Group at a national level in CONAIE.<sup>384</sup>

Nuna obviously gained a lot of personal satisfaction from this nomination and the engagement she had with women at a higher level, besides gaining the respect from the UPCCC to be their representative and the people in CONAIE that elected her. However Nuna also briefly mentioned the internal dynamics she encountered within CONAIE:

I was very worried because the opposition was hard. I mean, the men weren't in agreement with a document that we women presented at the Congress. The Congress lasted three or four days. The women began to nominate candidates. It was a different business to the *comuna*. You had to relate. I was concerned. I wasn't relaxed... They began to vote and I won with 150 votes, my *compañera* with 80 votes. I became the women's leader.<sup>385</sup>

I asked Nuna how she felt after being elected to this position:

My excitement and understanding was deep, with a big heart. My inspiration was to organise politically and actively, to make things in order to have a source of work for women, such as *artesanía*. In health, when we organised ourselves in preparing products using ingredients from our area, we gave training courses. We provided training courses in medicinal natural health, healthy eating, *artesanía*, dance. The women were excited... this helped us develop understanding a lot I think. I believe that, as I haven't studied, I haven't advanced. So this was a great asset. That's why I worked with them.<sup>386</sup>

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<sup>384</sup> *Ab bueno este yo como estuve aquí en los 60 trabajando con las compañeras, coordinadora de las mujeres, después, después que vine de Conaie era la--que entré de coordinadora, pero sin embargo era como apoyante aquí como otras compañeras mas, no sólo yo. Otras compañeras más. Entonces nosotros cómo sabíamos practicar en los congresos, me gustaba platicar para con . . . mujeres, para intercambiar experiencias de salud de artesanías. Me gustaba esto de conocer como son otras compañeras, conocer realidad de ellos, que actividad desempeñan igual para hacernos nosotros así. Por eso me gustaba de platicar, y por tan razones delegaron que participe a este que estaba realizando. Primer congreso que yo iba a constituir la Conaie, entonces me delegaron de aquí de la UPCCC. Unas diez compañeras o algo así creo que era, nos vamos un grupo de compañera a nivel del UPCCC. Nunca yo ni he soñado ni pensé nunca yo estar dirigente de la mujer de la Conaie a nivel nacional. Interview: Cañar, 7 July 2011.*

<sup>385</sup> *Quedé preocupadísima porque ahí fue duro el afrontamiento. O sea los compañeros no estuvieron de acuerdo con las mujeres que hubieran presentar ese documento al congreso. Creo que era tres o cuatro días ese congreso... las compañeras empezaron a nombrar las candidatas ya todo el congreso. Yo como estoy recién abriendo los ojos, emocionada de trabajar con artesanías, con las salud, con las compañeras, y ahí en la comuna es otra cosa. Hay que relacionar. Para mí una preocupación grande, no estuve tranquila. Ya empiezan a lanzar votos y yo gano con 150 votos. Otra compañera con 80 votos, y ya me quedo de dirigente de la mujer. Interview: Cañar, 7 July 2011.*

<sup>386</sup> *... mi emoción y mi conocimiento era amplio, corazón grande, trabajo con todas las compañeras. Eso eran entonces aspiración mía. O sea, organizarse políticamente y activamente, o sea, hacer las cosas, para tener un fuente de trabajo a las compañeras, en este caso ¿Qué podría ser en este caso artesanía? cuando nosotros organizábamos en la salud o sea, en preparación de alimentos con productos de propia zona, dábamos cursos de capacitación, entonces yo estuve 4 años. Dábamos cursos de capacitación, de salud medicinal, medicina natural, salud de alimentación, sobre artesanía, danza música. Emocionaba a las compañeras. . . . nos ayudó bastante al*

Lacking a formal education, Nuna used her political participation to broaden her awareness of socio-economic and political matters. I also asked Nuna how she felt about the various experiences she had had in different leadership roles:

At times I had support from the men, support from the women. I've always had a little. But they may also not support you, and can say many things. That was immaterial though, as my enthusiasm kept me going. Later the women approached me, grouped with me, supported me, and encouraged me. In each organisation that I have been in there's a different male president. Some are active and supportive. Others aren't interested in offering support.<sup>387</sup>

Consequently, Nuna reflects aspects of the discussion above in Section 6.1. She has faced challenges over men's attitudes towards women's participation, but appears to have overcome them through her inner strength and motivation.

Having occupied the various leadership roles outlined here, Nuna was the perfect candidate to be accepted into Asiri's school. I asked Nuna how she had 'arrived' there:

They invited me to it; they invited me because they knew I had not been to college. As I had been in CONAIE for two years, everyone knew me at a national level... so they invited me. So I participated in this way; they called us to see if we were interested in participating in the school.<sup>388</sup>

Notably, Nuna was not endorsed by an organisation to attend school. Instead, she was invited, further suggesting that her work was highly acknowledged and encouraged by the respective organisations and their members. She had built her *curriculum vitae* of 'leadership' roles up from a grass-roots level. When I asked her about the experience she had there, she heartily replied:

Well for me it was very exciting. The excitement was in learning. As I had never been to college or university, so I don't know what it means to study. For me it was very interesting, we met with women from all sorts of places.

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*conocimiento. Yo creo, que no he estudiado, no he avanzado.... Entonces eso fue dando a más amplio conocimiento. Por eso trabajé con ellas.* Interview: Cañar, 7 July 2011.

<sup>387</sup> *Yo bueno a veces yo tenía apoyos de los compañeros, apoyo de las compañeras. Eran, bueno, siempre he tenido apo-poco. Uno . . . pero siempre también le, no le apoyaban, decían cualquier cosa. Pero eso era pequeño, pero yo seguía con mi emoción. Luego con las compañeras que me acercaban y me agrupaban, me apoyaban, me animaban, cuyas yo seguía trabajando. Sí con esta-bueno, cada en la organización que he estado he estado con diferentes compañeros presidentes. Son activos, algunos activos, apoyantes. Otros no apoyan, no o sea no son dedicados a apoyar así.* Interview: Cañar, 7 July 2011.

<sup>388</sup> *A este me invitaron, así me invitaron porque, ya como conocían que yo no, no estuve en el colegio, conocían eso y me invitaron las compañeras, como que tuve dos años en la CONAIE y me conocieron todas, es a nivel nacional... entonces ellas me conocían, me invitaban. Entonces yo participaba un poco de esa manera, entonces, nos trataron de llamar que nosotros que si nos interesamos que podríamos participar en la escuela.* Interview: Cañar, 7 July 2011.

There we exchanged experiences concerning the organisational process, the reality of how we live as women, the activities we carry out, what sources of work we have, how we are economically active. And history at the same time, amongst many other things you learn.<sup>389</sup>

I was curious to know how Nuna thought her time at the school had helped her engagement with women elsewhere. Her response to my question suggested she had not fully understood me, as it did not directly relate to her work with *compañeras*. Rather, emphasis was placed on how she felt women began to educate themselves, questioning their roles within their localities: ‘... women themselves in communities and individual organisations decided to get educated, and become leaders. For a certain time they asked why men shouldn’t only serve as secretaries, only be treasurers’.<sup>390</sup> My assumption here is that, in response to my question, Nuna meant that she had influenced women and generated consciousness-raising through her training and experiences, which had encouraged engagement on a political level. Thus Nuna demonstrated her awareness of how training like this can aid in the exchange with other women to help establish public engagement and leadership. Without further information, it is difficult to assess to what extent attendance at the school increased her prior enthusiasm to work with women, besides her knowledge of the specific subject areas covered. When I asked what she had learnt, she told me she could not remember. It is clear, however, that the experience had a positive impact. She enjoyed meeting women from different localities, sharing experiences and learning from others. She told me later that, ‘in order to do what you can, you have to know what you can do’, making it clear that Nuna understood the need to recognise your personal strengths to create ‘change’.<sup>391</sup>

Nuna was never concerned with leading as an authority, but more in acting as a facilitator within groups and organisations. She was motivational in working

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<sup>389</sup> *Bueno ahí, en la escuela de Dolores Cacuango era--para mí era muy emocionante. La emoción era de aprender. Como yo nunca conocía o sea el colegio, universidad no como no la conozco cómo es el aprendizaje. Ahí para mí era muy interesante, nos habíamos reunido las compañeras de todos los lugares. Ahí intercambiando experiencias, el proceso organizativo, proceso de edad real de cómo se vive como mujeres, que actividades desempeñamos, o sea que fuentes de trabajo tenemos para todas las compañeras, cómo activamos así. Un intercambio a los momentos y también yo algún aprendizaje. Ir conociendo otras realidades. De que--de la historia mismo, muchas otras cosas usted sabe que se aprenden dentro.* Interview: Cañar, 7 July 2011.

<sup>390</sup> ... o sea decidiendo ellas mismas o ya como en cada una de las comunidades, cada una de las organizaciones y ya fueron formándose las compañeras, iban desempeñando como dirigentes. Hasta cierto tiempo también se discutían porque los compañeros no deben servir sólo para ser secretarías, sólo para ser tesoreras... Interview: Cañar, 7 July 2011.

<sup>391</sup> *Para poder qué hacer uno hay que conocer, qué se puede hacer.* Interview: Cañar, 7 July 2011.

alongside others with enthusiasm in order to implement projects, generate consciousness-raising via the sharing of understandings with women, and challenge negative male attitudes towards their participation. Nuna became increasingly aware of the problems that indigenous women faced, not only within political structures, but also at a more local level in relation to economics and health for example, which she principally learnt about via different lived experiences, particularly in “women-only” groups. Unfortunately, it is unknown to what extent Nuna’s family had a history of leadership, although her sister was married to a key political figure in the municipality of Cañar, indicating an element of political awareness and engagement within her extended family.

One important characteristic of Nuna’s story is that she has never married, nor has children. To what extent the leadership roles that she has undertaken would have been the same had she been married or had children is unknown, yet it is an interesting observation to make. I asked Nuna about this aspect of her life and whether she thought it had impacted her political participation:

I think that a married woman has double the work, double the worry. Married life, thinking about the husband, what he’s doing and how he is. For me I don’t have that, and that makes me happy. I do say sometimes that the two could support one another, could help each other. But on the other hand - less problems, less work... How many times I have wondered if it would have been the same if I had married. Would I have gone to CONAIE? Maybe if I had had children, there would have been limits to what I could do. I don’t think I would have been a leader. Here there are married women that are leaders. But they say it is hard. It’s hard despite their husbands being supportive... I reckon I wouldn’t have met other women or gone to other places if I’d been married. I’d have stayed here.<sup>392</sup>

Her latter point reflects the lack of mobility some women endure due to spousal attitudes. Clearly, Nuna is aware that had she married or had children, she may have encountered limits to opportunities. She also highlights how marriage and children

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<sup>392</sup> ...yo pienso que una mujer casada tiene su doble trabajo, doble preocupación. O sea vida del casado, hacer de piensa de otra cosa y doble trabajo, doble preocupación. Bueno uno libre entonces no es tanto ya, esto--mi marido cuando vendrá, cómo estará, no sé cuanta cosa. Entonces eso no hay para mí, eso es un para mí un alegría ya. Pero a veces digo a lo mejor los dos podríamos apoyar, los dos podemos ayudarse. Pienso así también alguna vez pero por otro lado digo así menos problema de, menos trabajo... A cuantas veces yo pienso si es que yo hubiera si es que yo tener hubiera casado no habría ido ni a CONAIE, ya hubiera haber tenido hijos, no sé, límites que podía haber. . . No habría sido dirigente pienso, pero hasta acá los mujeres casados son dirigentes. Pero nos cuentan que es duro. Eso es duro aunque el marido aunque apoye... No hubiera conocido otras compañeras digo, no hubiera conocido otros lugares digo es que hubiera casado y hubiera quedado, yo misma hubiera quedado ahí digo. Así pienso. Interview: Cañar, 7 July 2011.

can be difficult to balance for women leaders. Nonetheless, Nuna commented how her work had all been voluntary, without any remuneration. She said:

But I asked God to give me health so that I could do this work, fulfil the role for others. For me the spirit is to serve others. God has given me life and freedom to serve others. That's where my enthusiasm comes from, thus I don't give up.<sup>393</sup>

Although Nuna completed her primary education via a method of NFE rather than through the formal education system, it seems the knowledge she received concerning liberation theology is more significant in relation to her empowerment process than literacy. At the heart of Nuna's life is her faith. From a young age, Nuna had a sense of human rights and justice, particularly for women, and she associated her politically inclined activities with the teachings of liberation theology.<sup>394</sup> Through her engagement with other women during the hacienda period and later in the indigenous movement, Nuna gained experience and knowledge that she would not have necessarily acquired via formal education. A lack of formal education did not limit Nuna in acting as a leader at a community, provincial and national level. It can be said that participating in community groups and being elected to specific positions in an array of organisations not only gave Nuna a sense of interpersonal empowerment, but she also received significant recognition for her work which motivated her and influenced her appointments to positions of leadership. In conclusion, it can be said that through a series of learning experiences throughout her life, Nuna gained a level of *power within*, which in turn led into *power to* help in the facilitation of other women's processes of empowerment through the support she provided as a leader towards *power with*.

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<sup>393</sup> *Pero ese trabajo era sólo mi voluntad. No había remunerado, no había bonificación casi, casi hasta hoy... yo pedía a dios que de salud más, que de salud que voy a poder desempeñar estos trabajos, poder cumplir ante a los demás, y para mí el espíritu, eso, es servir a los demás. Dios ha dado mi vida, digo mi libertad, mi vida, para servir a los demás. Eso es mi emoción tan grande que tengo, por eso no me desmayo.* Interview: Cañar, 7 July 2011.

<sup>394</sup> Returning to Proaño and his influence on other people in Cañar, such as Miguel, Daniel and Segundo – also contemporaries of Nuna in Quilloac - one can only assume that Nuna's reference to liberation theology and what she learnt through it came from a similar context to others who engaged with Proaño. It is recognised, however, that further information from Nuna is required to confirm this.

## 6.2 Cañari Women's Public Engagement in Cañar

### *Mama Willka – A Native Healer and Leader*

Mama Willka is considered to be one of the wisest amongst the Cañari elders (Oyuela-Caycedo et al., 2010: 373). While not as formally active in indigenous politics as Asiri, Willka is Asiri's oldest sister, the eldest of five children born into a very poor family during the time of the hacienda.<sup>395</sup> Willka spent a lot of time with her aunt and predominantly lived with her grandmother, while her parents worked on the hacienda. Having a small plot of land for subsistence, which sometimes provided and sometimes did not, her parents could not feed all their children well. Willka's father fled the hacienda and began working in agricultural business and seed sowing, in order to buy livestock.<sup>396</sup> In addition to the memories Asiri had about her father, Willka commented that he was renowned for singing *Jaway* during harvest time, and 'was like a catechizer on the hacienda too, praying via rosary through song'.<sup>397</sup>

Willka only went to school for two years before her father became ill, when she was removed from school and looked after animals and did the cooking. Consequently, Willka is illiterate. As a child, Willka remembers helping her aunt with her native healing work, particularly as she received a sweet treat in return. Willka and her siblings would carry and pull wood, bring water and cut plants to help their aunt. Willka expressed to Ochoa (2010) that she used to help boil water and bring clean towels, while her aunt would attend to childbirths.

When Willka was ten years old, she recounts how 'an old man with white hair and beard, coated with a red tunic and cloak visited her old straw and adobe house' where she was with her mother (Ochoa, 2010):

... he chose me out of my four siblings. He looked for me and told my mother "I have been sent, I am a secretary of Padre López. He sent me to look for this girl. I want to give her blessings, I want to give her a healing". My mother got angry and said, "my daughter is not sick, so why do you want to heal her?" "No, I am fulfilling his request". He forced himself inside,

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<sup>395</sup> Willka's mother had eleven children in total, but only five were still alive in 2010-11. Her mother died several months before my arrival in Cañar, being well into the nineties.

<sup>396</sup> After agrarian reform, Willka's father did not want to access the cooperative, despite his wife's pleas, as he believed the State was going to finish the indigenous people off. As Asiri notes above, he later entered and became its leader. Interview: Willka, Cañar, 22 June 2011.

<sup>397</sup> ...era como catequista en el hacienda, que sabe hacer rezar rosario, por el canto. Interview: Cañar, 22 June 2011.

prayed over me, I did not understand what he said. He grabbed me here and he grabbed me there.<sup>398</sup>

According to Willka, Padre López was a Christian priest that toured countries healing the sick. She had heard stories about the priest via radio, but she had never met him personally. Her mother ran out to ask if he would cure her other children, but the man had already disappeared. After this healing, where the man touched her front, heart and limbs, Willka said that her life continued in the same way, only ‘from that moment I began to fall in love with plants’, and she had a desire to learn how to heal people (Ochoa, 2010).

Willka married around 20, having her first child at 21. After he was born, she did not know what would be the best thing to do when he got sick, so she would ask her aunt and other healers for advice.<sup>399</sup> Her aunt would help heal her children and Willka learnt what to do. With time, she cured her children, and her community began to notice what she did. Since then, Mama Willka has become the ‘most popular healer in Cañar’ (Ochoa, 2007).

Blankenship describes Mama Willka’s physical appearance in the following way:

... you’d have a hard time guessing her age. Parts of her look older, like her worn face with missing teeth, while other parts seem younger, like her legs, which are surprisingly girlish given a lifetime of walking up steep mountains with a heavy load on her back... Like most Cañari women, she is roundish and short, well under five feet, with a spherical face and brown, Asian eyes.... Her thick black hair hangs below her waist, the top half bound into a braid with a colored wool strip, the last twelve inches or so swinging loose (2013a: 172).

Willka has a certain physical presence that I always remember whenever I think about meeting her, interviewing her, and bumping into her in the street in Cañar; one of deep wisdom yet with a quiet force behind her.<sup>400</sup> Her cackling laughter

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<sup>398</sup> ... me escogió de los cuatro hermanas. Me buscó, me dijo a mi mamá que: “Yo, yo mandado vengo, yo soy un secretario de Padre López. Mandó buscar a esta chica. Yo quiero dar bendiciones, yo quiero dar curación”. A mama puso bravo y dijo “y mi hija no está enfermo, nada, ¿para que vas a quieres curar?”. “No, yo estoy cumpliendo su mandato.” Hizo de entrar a dentro, me oró, me rezó... qué diría pero yo no entendí. Y me cogió aquí y me cogió acá. Interview: Cañar, 22 June 2011.

<sup>399</sup> Willka has six children, one of whom illegally migrated to the USA several years ago to follow her husband, leaving her two sons with Mama Willka.

<sup>400</sup> Willka’s strong character was later emphasised during her interview, when she explained how she is not fearful to answer back and defend herself to mestizo people in the street or on the bus, when they attempt to discriminate her and boss her around; ‘I know how to argue, and I know how to shut them up!’ (...yo sé discutir, y sé hacer callar! Interview: Cañar, 22 June 2011).



resonates in my mind, as she would grin a toothless smile. Since the first day I met Mama Willka, I had always been curious about what lay behind those deep friendly eyes of hers. Judy had told me a lot about Willka and her role in the Cañari community and further afield. Willka had been to Canada on several occasions to attend meetings with other healers, and had clearly become a significant member of the indigenous organisation through her native healing practices. So what lay at the heart of these processes and how did Mama Willka gain such popularity?

Before her husband died, Mama Willka and her family ‘were struggling to survive on the few pitiful plots of land, mostly on steep mountainsides a two or three-hour walk away, that had been allotted to them during the agrarian reform’ (Blankenship, 2005: 164). With her husband suffering from alcoholism, his condition made life extremely difficult for Willka, who managed ‘to survive as best she could under marginal conditions’ (2005: 166). Following her husband’s death, Willka’s path to becoming a healer really took hold. Blankenship describes how Willka told her that while her husband was alive: ‘... [she] was not allowed to leave the house or the fields for more than a day... When I asked her why, she answered, “*Celos*” with a short bitter laugh. Jealousy. “He thought I might go with another man”’ (2005: 166).

Willka told a similar story to Ochoa (2010), in that her ‘*machista* husband’ became jealous when she travelled or met with others, but her children supported her and she sometimes secretly went out. Willka managed to attend national level meetings with other healers before he died, where they had discussed traditional medicine, but she had no knowledge of the spiritual element then. She was involved in other activities, such as hand sewing, but it was not until her husband died that Mama Willka began spiritual training. She learnt how to carry out ceremonies, healings at night, how to create altars, go up into the mountains and to waterfalls; ‘all this was new to me’.<sup>401</sup> She began to take trips to provinces across Ecuador to train with other healers; ‘some were wise, others not’.<sup>402</sup>

Following this, Willka left to go to Canada for three weeks, to attend the first International Medicine and Healing Gathering (Blankenship, 2005), a meeting on ancestral medicine attended by many shamans, traditional healers and native elders from across the globe. Having participated at a regional and national level within the

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<sup>401</sup> ‘...*todo eso para mí era más nuevo*’. Interview: Cañar, 22 June 2011.

<sup>402</sup> ‘... *algunos sí eran, sí eran sabios, algunos no*’. Interview: Cañar, 22 June 2011.

indigenous movement, Willka was asked by ECUARUNARI to go to Canada. She went with two other people; an indigenous woman who was a Director of Health from the province of Loja, and an indigenous man from Quito. Willka and the woman from Loja had previously met with some Canadians at a meeting in Quito, who had offered to pay for their trip.

Mama Willka says, however, that she had doubts over the content of the meetings in Canada, as she did not fully trust the translation from English to Spanish. Nonetheless, this was a significant experience:

... it seemed I was falling from the sky. Imagine, going by airplane, such distance. To cross over the sea, on top. Where will I be going?... I cried in the plane. Then I arrived, so many spiritual leaders, in Canada there are more leaders. As such, they did a ceremony for us; ceremony of food, welcome ceremony, goodbye ceremony, gift ceremony.<sup>403</sup>

Shortly after the first trip, she was invited back to Canada and took her sister, who worked with CONAIE, to help negotiate the travel and airports. This time she went for two months during winter, which she did not enjoy due to the weather. Nevertheless, on this occasion she attended a gathering where they held classes and carried out healings, held in a reserve. The following May she returned again with her sister, this time to the province of Saskatchewan. Between 2000 and 2008, Mama Willka visited Canada seven times in total, four of them organised by the University of Saskatchewan, who paid all of her expenses.

What is clear from Willka's narrative is that her work as a healer has been strengthened through exchanges with, and learning from, other healers. While this may be referred to as non-formal education, in that she is attending gatherings to learn, share knowledge and ceremonial practices with others, I argue that this form of learning has been of a more informal nature: 'to sing in ceremonies, there I have learnt, there I have succeeded... We used to be embarrassed to sing. Now I am not embarrassed, I sing where needed, as needed'.<sup>404</sup> In this sense, knowledge is passed down across generations, and between healers, rather than through the medium of a

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<sup>403</sup> ... parece que bajaba del cielo. Imagina, ir en vuelo, tanta lejura, tanta. Pasar pues eso encima de mar, encima. ¿Por dónde estaré yendo? ... en avión lloraba yo. Así llegaba ya tantos taitas de espiritual, taitas de lo que en Canadá son los más. Entonces ellos hacían ceremonia para nosotros: ceremonia de la comida, ceremonia de bienvenida, de la despedida, los regalos... Interview: Cañar, 22 June 2011.

<sup>404</sup> ...cantar en ceremonias, ahí he aprendido, ahí he logrado yo... Teníamos vergüenza de cantar. Ahora yo no tengo vergüenza, canto donde sea como sea. Interview: Cañar, 22 June 2011.

facilitator aiming to foster political and socioeconomic change among people.<sup>405</sup> Meetings like these also helped generate new opportunities for Willka, such as making international trips:

There is a ceremonial centre in Ukupacha for the people of Quito. There we meet, every two years for a gathering of elder women internationally... the elders there take me to Bolivia, to Chile, to Colombia, Guatemala, Mexico. They put half and I put half the travel fare.<sup>406</sup>

Willka does appreciate the value of training or '*capacitación*', but I understood this to be more relevant to her in the context of being a leader in her community and recognising her rights as an indigenous woman. Willka mentioned Asiri and her work in training women, and that she had been involved in some of the workshops. When I asked Willka what 'training' this involved, she said:

In order to begin to lead, in order to not be abused at home, by our own husbands. It was about being women, that we have dignity, we have life, we have a voice, just as much the same as men, we have everything, everything in order to defend ourselves...<sup>407</sup>

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<sup>405</sup> There is a body of literature that refers to 'informal education'. Just as non-formal education debates began in the international development arena in the 1960s, Overwien (2000) notes that discussions concerning informal education also began within the context of education and the Third World. For Coombs and Ahmed (1974: 8), informal education is defined as: 'the lifelong process by which every person acquires and accumulates knowledge, skills, attitudes and insights from daily experiences and exposure to the environment-at home, at work, at play; from the example and attitudes of family and friends; from travel, reading newspapers and books; or by listening to the radio or viewing films or television. Generally, informal education is unorganized and often unsystematic; yet it accounts for the great bulk of any person's total lifetime learning - including that of even a highly "schooled" person'. Overwien (2000) argues that nonformal education can be as problematic to achieve as formal education in some cases in the developing world, such as areas where there are limited resources. In these situations informal learning becomes the predominant mode of education, while this informal education is 'integral to the social fabric that produces and reproduces families, communities, and workplaces' (Walters, 1998: 436). Nevertheless, informal education does not occur in isolation and can indeed take place alongside that of formal and nonformal education too (La Belle, 1982). Further, in more recent years, the concept of 'lifelong learning' or 'lifelong education' has appeared (Tuijnman and Boström, 2002), whereby learning and education are processes that occur throughout the life-span (Tuijnman and OECD, 1999). Tuijnman and OECD identify the word 'learning' as not only being associated with formal education and training in classrooms, but that people learn 'informally at work, by talking to others, by watching television and playing games, and through virtually every other form of human activity' (1999: 89), thus corresponding with Coombs and Ahmed's definition of informal education.

<sup>406</sup> ... *en Ukupacha hay un centro ceremonial de los gentes de Quito. Entonces allá nos reunimos en, cada dos años para encuentro de mujeres mundial, ... ahí las mama, una es de Loja, ella me lleva, me llevó para Bolivia, para Chile, para Colombia, para Guatemala, para México. Entonces, esas mamas llevó a mí. Mitad pusieron ellas, mitad yo sabía poner pasaje.* Interview: Cañar, 22 June 2011.

<sup>407</sup> *Para que, que empiece a liderar, que empiece a no estar maltratadas de los hogares, de los propios esposos... Era que, que somos mujeres, que tenemos dignidad, tenemos vida, tenemos voz... como mismo como el hombre como mismo tenemos todo, todo, todo para poder defenderse...* Interview: Cañar, 22 June 2011.

I asked Willka about her views on women's participation within the indigenous movement. She thought that:

...now it is nearly the same. Half men, half women. We have a voice and vote, wherever, in order to talk, to defend... we aren't fallen. Some are, some struggle to talk in public, don't say anything. In ceremonies, there are plenty of medicine women, many midwives. But they say very little in public and know nothing. But us, we pass around tobacco to help us sing and pray. That, for us, is the qualifying of women.<sup>408</sup>

Despite her lack of literacy and formal education and her earlier struggles in life, Willka has always been a community leader. During the early 1980s, she took the place of her husband as cooperative president, when his turn came around, as he was too sick to assume the role.<sup>409</sup> This was a break from the norm, as women were not permitted to be 'official' presidents in those days (Blankenship, 2005: 165). Willka herself was not a formal cooperative associate.<sup>410</sup> She said:

I went to a cooperative meeting, informed myself, began to support the cooperative and they elected me as leader. I had to accept. It was hard work in the cooperative, working every day and then a meeting on Saturdays... In the cooperative it was easier to unite people. After two years there and then in my community, they sent me to UPCCC. I enjoy supporting the community. I used to be the community president, and then I came to the UPCCC, sent due to my abilities, for the community and for TUCAYTA... So the organisation trained me further... In the community now, people don't get together, only if I'm going to do, or we're going to do, something, THEN they meet!'.<sup>411</sup>

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<sup>408</sup> ...ahora es todo casi igualito. Hombre mitad, mujeres mitad. Tenemos voz y voto donde sea, dondequiera para poder hablar, para poder defender,... nosotros no estamos caído, algunos sí todavía. Todavía no pueden hablar en público, no pueden decir nada. Y en la ceremonia hay bastantes mujeres en la medicina, bastantes mamas parteras. No pueden, bueno, hablar un poco hablan, pero en público en nada. En ceremonias, haciendo ceremonia, hacemos pasar tabaco para que canten. Nada, ni saben nada. Pero nosotros con el tabaco, nosotros con el maraca, cantamos... Entonces, eso es para nosotros el capacitación de las mujeres. Interview: Cañar, 22 June 2011

<sup>409</sup> Willka's husband became an associate of San Rafael Cooperative after agrarian reform.

<sup>410</sup> Willka inherited her husband's access to cooperative land, a distance away from her home (30 minute drive or 2 hour walk), after his death. 'We have no money, but we have land', she said. (...no tenemos plata, pero sí tenemos tierra. Interview: Cañar, 22 June 2011).

<sup>411</sup> ... yo me fui para reunión de cooperativa. Entonces yo, yo me informaba. Empezaba así a apoyar a los cooperativas y me pusieron dirigente de, de cooperativa. Tendría que aceptarle. Entonces de eso... a mí era, en cooperativa era muy pesado porque era, era de el lunes era trabajo, sábado era reunión. En el cooperativa sí es fácil de reunir a gentes. Cuando estoy haciendo dos años allá cooperativa, y en mi comunidad me ponen aquí... a mí me gusta de apoyar la comunidad... yo era más antes, era líder. Era presidenta de la comunidad. Entonces yo dentro de UPCCC por el comunidad, por el organizo el TUCAYTA. Entonces por mi habilidad me llevaron para UPCCC... Entonces en organización me hicieron más capacitar... En el cooperativa sí es fácil de reunir a gentes. En la comunidad ya no hay gente que reúne. Cuando empieza hay algo que voy a dar, algo que vamos a hacer. Ahí Sí se reúne. Interview: Cañar, 22 June 2011.

Willka became the provincial spiritual leader within the UPCCC, with a clinic room at the organisation's building in Cañar town centre, where she carries out cleansings and healings twice a week for patients. People of all ages and ethnic backgrounds go to visit her, with an array of conditions and complaints:

... clients overflow from morning until night. After clinic hours, they come to her house, especially at night when they believe her healing powers are more effective... At her house, Mama [Willka] sometimes works all night, her main room filled with patients sitting or lying on rush mats. Many simply stay the night once their healing is done and travel home in the morning. They pay with everything from cash to potatoes to live guinea pigs (Blankenship, 2005: 162-164).<sup>412</sup>

When asked how she thought people perceived her, as a female indigenous healer, Willka said that she felt some people respected and liked her, but others do not. In response to my question as to why, she said: 'because of envy at times. They too want to do it and they can't. I have this in my spirit, as given power, and as I continue to heal, night and day, I make ceremony. I looked for a healer and there the spirits gave me that power'.<sup>413</sup> She recounted how she went to visit an elder healer in Imbabura in the north of Ecuador several years ago. She arrived with pain in her stomach and depressed, with no energy. The man recognised her tired body, asking her why she had begun to heal people without being 'crowned' and having permission from her ancestors. As such, she then spent 15 hours in his mud hut (Ochoa, 2010); one assumes being given powers to heal.

I enquired what she meant by the word power, or '*poder*' in the above quote: 'In this type of power I can carry out ceremonies, I can heal. In people it also heals, in the ceremonies it goes well because I have power... I believe they tell me that we are born for this'.<sup>414</sup> When asked what the word 'empowerment' meant to her, she replied: 'it is a power. It is a capacity that develops'.<sup>415</sup> Willka related the type of power she referred to here back on to her own work, saying: 'For example, I am on this path: power to be able to heal, power to be able to help people, to carry out

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<sup>412</sup> In her spare time, Willka commented that she carries out agricultural work, and sometimes sews or spins wool.

<sup>413</sup> *A veces por la envidia. Ellos también quieren hacer y no pueden. Yo tengo eso mi espíritu, como estoy contando, como dio poder y como yo para avanzar curar hacía de noche y día, hacía ceremonia. Yo, yo busqué a un curandero y ahí los espíritus me dio ese poder.* Interview: Cañar, 22 June 2011.

<sup>414</sup> *Yo, en ese tipo de poder es lo que yo puedo hacer ceremonia, puedo curar. En los gentes también se cura, en los en ceremonia se, sí sale bien porque tengo poder... creo que me dicen que ya hemos nacido para eso.* Interview: Cañar, 22 June 2011.

<sup>415</sup> ... *es un poder. Es una capacidad que va avanzando.* Interview: Cañar, 22 June 2011.

ceremonies world wide...'.<sup>416</sup> She regarded this power as a 'gift', which has enabled her move out of poverty and to help humanity, including those without money (Ochoa, 2010): 'She hopes to plant a seed in all of the community' (Ochoa, 2010).

This story of Mama Willka demonstrates how it is possible for an individual to turn their life around, from living in poverty to becoming a recognised leader within their community, enjoying significant levels of power in multiple ways; personally and for the collective. Above all, however, her story demonstrates how it is possible to achieve these things without undergoing any formal education. Mama Willka's illiteracy has not been a burden, and she has found mechanisms to get around this to pursue her healing work. She is one of only a few Cañaris to have travelled internationally by legal means, not to mention with an invitation from another country.

It is as a consequence of her husband's death that Mama Willka had a world of opportunity open up to her. She no longer had to sneak behind her husband's back with fear of being abused later, and encountered a new freedom. In an interview with Willka's daughter, Yori reflected on her mother's life after her father died:

She had more freedom and everything changed, she became better known, more famous, and people looked for her. She was so busy. I always watched her, asking myself where I was meant to get so much energy from too. As I am also a mother, have to look after my children, the house, myself... A lot has changed since my father died. She overcame things in a way that she never thought possible.<sup>417</sup>

While there is some irony in the fact that she underwent such suffering in order to become 'successful', it is undeniable that the loss of her husband had a significant impact on how Willka lived her life from then on.

From a western perspective, Mama Willka could be viewed as an 'empowered' woman, yet I argue that this cannot be attributed to her having a specific education, but more so to 'lifelong learning'. It has been her life experiences, engagement with other healers and influences in her childhood, such as that of her

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<sup>416</sup> ...por ejemplo yo lo que estoy en ese camino: poder de hacer de curar, poder de hacer de, de ayudar a las gentes, hacer ceremonia mundo entero Interview: Cañar, 22 June 2011.

<sup>417</sup> ... Entonces ella tenía más libertad y todo cambió. Se fue haciéndose más conocida, más famosa y le buscan. Ella ya casi no tuvo tiempo para nada. Entonces yo siempre he estado aquí viendo, a veces yo hasta yo mismo digo ¿de dónde sacaré tantas energías? Porque soy madre, también tengo que ver a mis hijos, tengo que hacer mis cosas, y tengo en la casa y... Entonces así ha cambiado mucho de que, de que murió mi papá. Ella ya superó algo más de lo que no pensó ella. Interview: Cañar, 22 June 2011.

aunt, that are most noteworthy in this process of empowerment. Furthermore, it cannot be ignored that the interpersonal experience of the spirits plays the biggest part in her work as a healer, as she relies on these for power to carry out healing or cleansing. As she argues, not everyone is given the gift of healing, and she commented to me several times how some people *believe* that they are healers, but that they are not in *practice*: ‘their mouth works in saying “I am a healer”, but performing a healing in the end, they cannot’.<sup>418</sup> Consequently, she suggests that these people become envious of those that can heal. Given her popularity amongst the Cañari community and the indigenous organisation, it is without doubt that Mama Willka does indeed hold spiritual power to make a difference in people’s lives. This is where the ‘change’ element of empowerment sets in; her spiritual empowerment through her ‘lifelong learning’ has a positive impact on those around her. In turn, Willka is also passing knowledge down to the next generation, encouraging Yori to participate in spiritual healing at their home, which Yori began to do when Willka was busy elsewhere:<sup>419</sup>

...she says, “you have to learn. I mean, when I die, who is going to help the people?”... So psychologically you say, “well, maybe she’s right, and I have to do it”. People are recommended to come and look for mother. When she wasn’t here, I began to heal too. Searching for Mama Willka, they’d say, “is she not here?” Not finding her, they’d say, “you as her daughter, you should know something, please, help, this hurts me, help me. I have come to be cured, but if not, I will leave”. So I began to look for remedies; medicines, plants. And they would tell me how they had seen her do it. So I would prepare and treat them. People would leave relaxed and grateful, and when she is not here they look for me. I have also been advancing little by little in rituals; carrying out ceremonies in thanks, honour of harvest, planting seeds, everything. So you participate, at least because I live here too. So you begin to live that life, helping them. People recognise it and say, “if Mama Willka isn’t there, the daughter heals”. The people began to consider me like that, and some look for me to help heal the pains they have.<sup>420</sup>

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<sup>418</sup> ... la boca trabaja que “yo soy curandera”, tal, cual, pero en total haciendo, hacer curación no pueden. Interview: Cañar, 22 June 2011.

<sup>419</sup> Yori and her three children live with Mama Willka. Her husband migrated to the USA.

<sup>420</sup> ...ella misma ha dicho que ‘tiene que aprender, o sea, yo cuando muero ¿quién va a ayudar a la gente?’ ... entonces uno ya psicológicamente dice pues ‘debe tener razón y hay que hacer eso’, y que la gente también viene recomendado por mucha gente, buscan a mamá... Entonces yo también empecé cuando ella no está aquí. Venía la gente y buscaba a ella y decía: “¿No está ella?” Entonces ya la gente buscaba a Mamá Willka y no encontraba y decía, “tú como hija, sí, debes saber algo, por favor me duele esto, ayúdeme, y he venido para irme curando, pero así no, voy a regresar”. Entonces yo empezaba a buscar los remedios; la medicina, las plantas y así hablaba como veía que hacía ella. Entonces me puse a preparar y les daba así. Y ya la gente iba tranquilizándose y se iban agradeciendo, y cuando no está ella me buscaban a mí. Entonces, luego he ido más poco más ya avanzando en lo que ellos llevan también los rituales; hacen las ceremonias en agradecimiento, en honor a la cosecha, las siembras,

Mama Willka's work appears to have indirectly given Yori a sense of purpose and direction in her life since her husband migrated to the USA several years ago. Yori told me that developing skills in healing, however, was often an unconscious process, and that she had learnt a lot through 'doing' rather than having Mama Willka teach her:

I haven't had the ambition to watch how she does it, how she cures them. I mean, I believe that each person has the ability in whatever way he or she does. And you do it unconsciously. My mother has taught me something's, such as diagnosing using an egg. Those things she has taught me, but there are other things that you unconsciously learn by seeing and doing with people.<sup>421</sup>

Consequently, Mama Willka's role and fame as a Cañari healer has enabled her daughter to independently develop her own abilities in the same field, aiding to demonstrate how the relationship between mothers and daughters can be used as a mechanism of autonomy and empowerment.<sup>422</sup> Illiterate and widowed, Mama Willka changed her life around following the death of her husband and the end of an abusive relationship. Her influence upon those around her, and particularly her daughter, is evident; Willka's interpersonal empowerment and leadership qualities are being passed on to the next generation.

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*de todo. Entonces uno ya se va participando ya al menos porque vivo aquí mismo. Entonces uno también ya se vino viviendo esa vida, y ayudando a ellos. Que la gente también reconocía y decía que "no está mamá miche pero si cura la hija". Entonces así la gente también me fue reconociendo. Entonces hay algunas gente que ...me buscan a mí, para que ayuden a sanar algunos dolores que tienen.* Interview: Cañar, 22 June 2011.

<sup>421</sup> *No he tenido esa ambición de estar viendo cómo hace, qué hace, cómo le cura, o sea, yo creo que cada persona tiene su habilidad de cualquier forma. Entonces. Ya este inconscientemente uno ya, ya lo vio, ya. En cosas sí me ha enseñado mi mamá. O sea para diagnóstico del huevo... Entonces así eso sí me ha enseñado, pero hay cosas que inconscientemente uno ya, ya se ha visto y ya se aprende o se practica ya con la gente.* Interview: Cañar, 22 June 2011.

<sup>422</sup> At the same time, Yori said that her involvement in healing had helped her decide on a university course. As people trusted her to help with their problems, Yori wanted to study something related to this, but without studying Andean medicine per se. At the time of interview, Yori had enrolled on a part-time clinical psychology degree course in Cuenca, being the only indigenous person enrolled on it. Despite finding the balance of being a mother against study a challenge, she said, 'if you don't sacrifice yourself then you will not achieve anything... I am strengthening myself... because my mother is getting older, who knows what will happen'. The advantage that Yori has is that she only goes to university on Saturdays, meaning she is available to her children during the week. Likewise, her children are now of an age to occupy themselves more easily than when they were little. (*... si uno no hace sacrificio si uno entonces no va a lograr a nada... estoy esforzándome... porque mi mamá ya también ya se va más avanzando más edad, no sé qué va a pasar.* Interview: Cañar, 22 June 2011).



### ***Mama Flor – A Community Nurse and Leader***

Sat between Willka and Asiri in birth rank, Flor was born in 1954. In addition to what Willka told me about her parents during the hacienda epoch and following agrarian reform, Flor also mentioned that her father went to the coast, employed in trading goods across the sierra. Flor also emphasised her father's capacity for singing *Jaway* during harvest, indicating that this was a significant thing for a man to do, given both she and Willka mentioned it.<sup>423</sup> Flor commented that:

My father was very active, very rebellious, and very indispensable, he was good, but, well, how can I put it? A rebel. Not in the abusive sense, but he had the impulse to keep moving forward. He did not get overwhelmed or weighed down. He wanted to do everything. We have that blood, as we are like that.<sup>424</sup>

Having said that, Flor told me how her father did not believe education for girls was worthwhile. Through perseverance, however, Flor finished primary school before her parents sent her to work in the cooperative. She helped her father in agriculture from 13 to 18 years old. She then decided that she wanted to continue studying:

I got fed up, as other girls in the neighbourhood went to school and college. I said, "Why don't I continue studying? Why are they there and I am here, working? No", I said, "I am leaving here and I am going to study"... I aspired to be something, to know something, at least to have a profession. I wondered what my vocation was, what it would be like to give an injection, to attend a childbirth. I didn't want to be in agriculture or attending to animals... I said, "I'm going to save money and go and learn, I even want to speak Spanish better. I am going to try and study, because when you do, you should be something in life".<sup>425</sup>

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<sup>423</sup> In Chapter IV, Flor explained that life after agrarian reform was difficult without the routine of hacienda life for her mother, who had to go out to find food for her children. Drawing on the information provided by Asiri and Willka about their father, in addition to Flor's, it is not clear how he changed his mind over becoming a cooperative member after initially deciding not to be. Thus an element of confusion may arise for the reader here, concerning their mother's experience following agrarian reform.

<sup>424</sup> ... *mi padre era bien valiente, bien bien rebelde, bien forzoso, era bueno pero, él era, ¿cómo te puedo decir? Un rebelde, no rebelde para pegar nada sino, tenía un pulso de salir adelante. Así era el padre. No quedarse ahí aplastada, no quedarse de quedarse ahí oprimida, no. Él quería salirle así de todo, esa sangre seremos nosotros porque así somos.* Interview: Cañar, 22 June 2011.

<sup>425</sup> *Yo la aspiración yo tenía ser algo, saber algo, ser saber por lo menos ser algún algún profesión tenía. Pensaba eso yo, yo yo decía mi vocación será digo, ¿cómo quisiera saber poner una inyección? ¿Cómo quisiera saber atender un parto? ¿Cómo quisiera saber algo en el futuro? No quiero estar en animales, no quiero estar en la agricultura, yo pensaba eso... Decía yo decía, yo voy a recoger platita, voy a estar ahí, voy a aprender siquiera a hablar en castellano si quiero un poco más, más mejor. Y digo voy a tratar de estudiar porque cuando ahí es cuando se estudia ahí debo ser algo en la vida.* Interview: Cañar, 12 July 2011.

Seeing other women in her community as an example of what she could achieve, Flor left home, to her parent's displeasure, and joined the monastery as a domestic servant following a conversation with a friend. In doing so, she also narrowly missed a forced marriage. After working at the monastery for two years, she was sent to a Proaño in Riobamba to study nursing at the Escuela Radiofónica. Flor's parents were reluctant, but Flor and Proaño persuaded her father that it would be beneficial. He then agreed to help support her studies.<sup>426</sup>

During her time in Riobamba, Flor received various scholarships, ultimately staying there for eight years as a nurse, plus attending college. In the meantime her father, as president of San Rafael Cooperative, convinced people in Cañar to create a health centre in San Rafael, and told the Ministry of Health that his daughter would come to work for them as a nurse. Flor said, 'my father explained that his daughter was already trained, and that she could return to work here'.<sup>427</sup> The way in which Flor expressed this made it sound as if her father was proud of Flor for her accomplishments in Riobamba.

After two years working in San Rafael for free, Flor searched for paid work, as it was not sustainable. She was employed at Azogues Hospital on a contract basis for a year and lived at the Azogues convent. The San Rafael health centre finally obtained a paid position for her and she returned to work for three years before marrying. After having her first child, Nuria (see Chapter V), Flor continued to work at the health centre next door to her house, sharing economic and domestic responsibilities with her husband, while a nanny looked after the children – three in total. Twelve years after marriage, Flor's spouse died of a sports injury. Needing to provide for her children, Flor maintained her nursing occupation. Flor explained that, had she not had a job when her husband died:

I would not have been able to maintain my kids or give them education. To provide food and clothing was hard. They would probably have migrated or not finished college had I not worked. But I never sent them to migrate. I had to help them finish school.... My son wanted to migrate when he was fifteen, but I told him he couldn't and that I would provide for his education, that he go to university and see how it would benefit him one day... I knew

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<sup>426</sup> While it is not entirely evidenced, it can be presumed that Flor's connection to Proaño helped Asiri in her own educational process with Proaño in Riobamba later; Flor set a precedent.

<sup>427</sup> *...es que dice mi padre, no mi hija ya está preparada, ella puede regresarle y puede traerle.* Interview: Cañar, 12 July 2011.

education was fundamental and to be valued... When you study you can be something in life.<sup>428</sup>

Therefore, rather than “giving up” following the loss of her husband, Flor remained strong for her family, determined to send her children to university. She also began working for TUCAYTA. She expressed how this ‘opened my eyes more towards Andean medicine’.<sup>429</sup> During her time in TUCAYTA she led training workshops, and worked with local women in traditional remedies. She referenced her aunt, in the same way Willka did: ‘my aunt also knew how to work in natural medicine with plants. I was very curious... so I wondered why I shouldn’t involve myself in that too and study them’.<sup>430</sup> In this light, in the case of Willka and Flor, the social capital found within extended family, via their aunt, provided a building block in their vocational processes.

With the knowledge Flor had gained, she not only taught women but also learnt a lot from village elders:

When I began to work there I started a three-year project, locating all the women who knew about traditional medicine. To give workshops and further what they knew. I learnt more and more. They knew so many things, especially the elders, but had them locked away in their hearts...<sup>431</sup>

Thus Flor observed the potential in these women and how they could share their knowledge with others for the benefit of a collective group of women. She recognised the value she gained from this herself, while also highlighting the training that she imparted to other women. Consequently, there was a reciprocal process of knowledge sharing: ‘Working with them was really good. I taught about nutrition, Andean medicine, I did courses, training workshops, a lot of organising and training

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<sup>428</sup> ... no hubiese mantenido a mis hijos o dar estudio y educación a mis hijos... Y dar manutención, dar vestimenta, era duro. Si yo no hubiese salido buscarles algo de protección, algo de mí de mi trabajo, si no tuviera nombramiento, entonces mis hijos hubiese estado migrando, no hubiese acabado colegio. Pero no le mandé de la migración. Yo tuve que acabar la escuela... Mi hijo quiso ir migrando edad de 15 años, dije a mi hijo no, ‘no te vayas, yo te voy a dar estudio, vállate a universidad, písate ahí, veras como un día te vayas a soportar’. ... Sabía que la educación era lo lo más fundamental que era era valorar... cuando se estudia, ahí debe ser algo en la vida. Interview: Cañar, 12 July 2011.

<sup>429</sup> Ahí más me abrí los ojos. Bien, abrir los ojos en medicina andina. Interview: Cañar, 12 July 2011.

<sup>430</sup> ... una tía mía también sabía trabajar así en la medicina, medicina tradicional con las plantitas. Yo era bien curiosa... así, yo también pensaba, por qué no voy a meterme en en saber estudiar más de las plantas medicinales, y me fui. Interview: Cañar, 12 July 2011.

<sup>431</sup> ... cuando entré, entré a trabajar en esa organización saqué el proyecto para tres años para re--para recoger a todas las mamacitas que saben. Para dar taller y también ellas que difundan lo que saben. Y de certificado para ellas. Entonces ahí aprendí más. Así aprendí más más más más. Las mamacitas sabían, las más antiguas sabían las cosas, sabían pero tenían cerrado en el corazón. Interview: Cañar, 12 July 2011.

of women. The whole four years were for something – understanding’.<sup>432</sup>

Following this experience, Flor decided to return to study, as she felt she needed a title to secure her work.<sup>433</sup> Prior to this, her training skills were built on informal learning, knowledge and experience, ‘in order to encourage women to work, and be someone who can organise people in the community. To have meetings, bring women together to support one another’.<sup>434</sup> I asked Flor what difference she thought she had made to women:

Before, it was really hard to get people together. Visiting their homes, bringing and inviting them, being friendly. Before, there wasn’t so much migration, so when there were Andean medicine training courses, 30 or 40 women came, a full room. Then I did embroidery and dressmaking with the women. They began to cotton on. It wasn’t just about getting them out the house, but for them to learn, share, give something. We have to give them something and they have to, too. Demonstrate something, not only take away.<sup>435</sup>

This demonstrates how Flor was aware that collective organising was a two-way process, and that group participants could not only attend workshops, but that they had to contribute something too. In this sense, Flor attempted to generate *power with* amongst the group, empowering one another via knowledge production.

To carry out projects such as these within TUCAYTA, Flor explained that

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<sup>432</sup> *Ha sido muy bueno, trabajar con ellas. Abí hice de nutrición, hice de medicina andina. Hice cursos, capacitaciones, bastante bastante organizado formado organización de las mujeres, talleres. Los cuatro años entero era para algo, saber yo, conocimiento.* Interview: Cañar, 12 July 2011.

<sup>433</sup> When interviewed, Flor was working at a community health centre in another Cañari community, where she was relocated to after the San Rafael centre closed. She worked eight hours a day all week. She had a lot of moral support from her family and in-laws for her work. Flor had a primary interest in traditional medicine and had studied a course in it at the University of Riobamba as a mature student in her fifties. Running a clinic at her home in the evening to carry out cleansings and treatments using traditional medicine, she felt obtaining a degree title in this field of work would prevent her from being fined by the authorities. She also believed it would enable her to retire from nursing early to work privately. Flor is an expert in traditional midwifery and childbirth, focusing her university thesis on Andean obstetrics. She also aids Mama Willka in her ceremonies from time to time.

<sup>434</sup> *... para poder sacar como una mujer estando abí, trabajando, una mujer que preparara a la gente de la comunidad. Hacer reuniones, traer a la mujer para que pueda apoyar a uno mismo también.* Interview: Cañar, 12 July 2011.

<sup>435</sup> *...para mí era durito recoger, recoger a la gente. Ir a visitar en las casas, venir trayendo a ellas, invitaciones, ser sociable con ellas, y así cuando--así era más antes. Ahora no había mucho antes no había mucho migración, no había, y entonces eso cuando había cursos, capacitaciones, la gente venía no más tenía 30-40 mujeres, y abí sala llenito. Después de, después de que ya hice de medicina andina, antes que sí medicina de tradición, talleres, vuelta formé para, para bordado. Que haga este, corte y confecciones, ese saqué con lo que sacaba. También preparé a las mueres así. Entonces abí se va cogiendo a la gente. Compartir, no sacar de las mujeres lo que ellas saben sino también compartir, aprenda, darle a ellas. Hay que dar a las mujeres y ellas también nos da. Sí a demostrar algo, para ellas, no sólo sacarle.* Interview: Cañar, 12 July 2011.

she had no budget or financial support, but had to look to outside institutions for help:

You have to sacrifice yourself as a leader, searching. Making applications, going to offices, showing the project proposal. That's how you obtain money for training workshops... And we've done it. That's a leader. If I weren't to look, without money I could do nothing, it would be worthless.<sup>436</sup>

Flor is a motivated woman, searching for the good of all via her leadership qualities. She is also cognisant of the need to work hard to achieve goals. More recently Flor has been the TUCAYTA organisational leader, in addition to undertaking the role of vice-president for Asiri's Escuela de Formación. She said:

In the movement we have the right to go out. To go to ECUARUNARI, CONAIE. A leader has to go, fight, do something. I was the leader of the Women, Health and Infancy Group in TUCAYTA. As such, you open your eyes; you get to know who is who, their ages, and their community. How the community feels. That's how you learn.<sup>437</sup>

Out of all her experiences as a leader, Flor said she had most enjoyed organising women, 'creating family gardens, income from guinea pigs, teaching medicine'.<sup>438</sup> Flor's vocational and educational development, be formal, non-formal or informal, had clearly shaped her empowerment process, but it is a focus on 'working together' that has been at the heart of her work and personal satisfaction.

A noteworthy reflection to make here is that Asiri, Willka and Flor all reference their father in some capacity. Flor believed she and her sisters had inherited his politically rebellious nature. Their father was well known within the Cañari community during the hacienda and post-agrarian reform era. Hence, there is an overall element of historical and present-day leadership qualities within the same family unit. When considering the three sisters, against one another, their respective narratives are independently dynamic yet each individual originated from the same crucible. These three women have dominant public roles to play.

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<sup>436</sup> *Hay que sacrificar a una mujer dirigente, buscando. Haciendo un solicitud, ir a instituciones, haciendo proyecto, ahí es lo que sale el dinero para poder dar capacitaciones, charlas... Y así hemos hecho, así es una dirigente. Y si no le hago nada, si sólo pusieron sólo nombre no más, si no busco proyectos, no busco ayuda por ahí con qué plata le hago nada, no vale para nada.* Interview: Cañar, 12 July 2011.

<sup>437</sup> *En la organización, entonces la movimiento indígena ya tenemos derechos de salir. Si ir a Ecuarrunari, Conaie, una dirigente hay que irle, lucharle, hacer algo. Estaba tres años dirigente de mujer en TUCAYTA, dirigente de salud y niñez, ya. Entonces es que ya se va abriendo los ojos, ya se va sabiendo quién es, y qué edad tienen, desde la comunidad. Qué siente la comunidad, desde ahí se va aprendiendo.* Interview: Cañar, 12 July 2011.

<sup>438</sup> *... tener buertos familiares, tener criadora de cuis, también de medicina. Así de medicina enseñarle.* Interview: Cañar, 12 July 2011.

### ***Urpi – A Community Leader and Provincial Education Director***

Urpi was born in 1965 and has five siblings. During the hacienda period her father was a *mayoral* in Quilloac. While although she does not place much significance on this, is important to remember in relation to hierarchies within indigenous social structures during that time (see 4.2). As a youngster, Urpi was educated at the community school in Quilloac until sixth grade. She was prevented from going to college, as her father believed that it was not an appropriate environment for girls: ‘He’d say, “They bond together. Girls and boys. My God. What kind of college is that going to be?”’<sup>439</sup> When she was twelve, Urpi became a literacy teacher to elder women in her community. She said, ‘my students were 40, 50, 60 years old. But I learnt a lot from them, as we had many experiences to share and we carried out projects’.<sup>440</sup> Urpi helped her students to create women’s groups to develop socio-economic projects through the aid of FUNDAGRO.<sup>441</sup> They established vegetable plots to help with household subsistence and grew medicinal plants, in addition to setting up guinea pig farms.<sup>442</sup> Continuing with her studies, Urpi did not have time to dedicate to these projects any further, but the groups nevertheless continued to function after her departure.<sup>443</sup>

Urpi explained that she wanted to pursue higher education as she felt she lacked skills in leadership and teaching, and wanted to learn more. She was envious of her friends who had gone to college, and her brother encouraged her to go once he had graduated. Several months after she began college, Urpi married her husband. She highlighted how he had supported and encouraged her in her studies, which in

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<sup>439</sup> *El decía, mi papa, 'se junta. Hay jóvenes y chicas. Dios mío, que colegio va a ser, pues?'*. Interview: Cañar, 22 June 2011.

<sup>440</sup> *... mis estudiantes eran quizás de 40, de 50, de 60. Pero yo aprendí mucho de ellos, porque ellos tenían muchas experiencias. Entonces con ellos compartí, eee, realizamos unos proyectos.* Interview: Cañar, 29 November 2010.

<sup>441</sup> FUNDAGRO (Fundación para el Desarrollo Agropecuario) was an agricultural development foundation promoted by USAID with the objective of ‘strengthening training, transfer of technology, and adaptive research to satisfy the needs of small- and medium-size farmers. The intention was to create organizations with a strong client and private-sector orientation and with sustainable funding’ (Echeverría et al., 1996: 16-17). Also see Bebbington and Thiele (1993: 123-124).

<sup>442</sup> Guinea pigs play a significant role in Andean social life, and the breeding of them was one domestic chore carried out by women. See Morales (1995) for a detailed study on the use and role of guinea pigs in Andean culture.

<sup>443</sup> The women maintained the guinea pig projects, and grew strawberries and worked in handicrafts.

turn led Urpi to tell herself ‘I have to study, I have to finish’.<sup>444</sup> Urpi did not want to become dependent on her husband, saying: “‘I have to study to be independent, to do what I want, to dress how I wish, to eat what I like’”, that’s what motivated me’.<sup>445</sup>

When I first interviewed Urpi, she was a teacher at Instituto Quilloac, with a Bachelors Degree in Design and Implementation of Educational Projects. Urpi was also the first woman to become community leader of Quilloac. When asked about her motivation towards this role, she attributed aspects of her leadership qualities to a prior need to create peace in her home. She explained how she decided to send her husband to an alcohol rehabilitation clinic:

Many men here in the community are alcoholics. In my case, even though I fought to help my husband, I did not have peace in my home. There was a rehabilitation centre, and I sent him there. Then more women followed, sending their husbands to the clinic for therapy. We women also received therapy. So I think I began with that; there are twelve women who have their husbands there at the moment. Some men tell me I am a feminist, that I am giving armour to women... Wow, they think that! In reality,... in our community, divorce is not permitted, separation is not permitted... So instead we try to find an alternative, some solution to creating familial harmony.<sup>446</sup>

Having established a pleasant home life, Urpi stated that she felt part of her responsibility, as a leader, was to demonstrate her familial warmth in the community:

... more than anything, to show the trust I have at home, to the people, to women, to men. To work together as a team, looking to benefit all, not only certain people or groups, but for everyone... in certain homes there is inequality, which I have fought against. I have fought for equality, within the community. That, I believe, has encouraged me to keep going. I am a woman

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<sup>444</sup> “...tengo que estudiar, tengo que terminar”. Interview: Cañar, 22 June 2011.

<sup>445</sup> “Tengo que estudiar yo mismo, para ser independiente de el, para poner lo que yo quiero, para vestirme en lo que yo quiero, para comer y vaya así, vaya poder, porque si no, no”. Entonces, eso me motivo mas. Interview: Cañar, 22 June 2011.

<sup>446</sup> *Acá la sociedad es ... los varones son alcohólicos, demasiado alcohólicos, pero en mi caso yo no, yo no tenía paz en mi hogar, pero aún así luchaba, cómo ayudar con mi pareja, más bien enteré que había un centro de rehabilitación, mandé hacia allá y qué hacen las demás mujercitas más bien siguen a sus esposos internando en la clínica en las terapias, las mujeres también recibimos las terapias entonces creo que prácticamente yo comencé con eso, ahora ya hay están doce mujeres que ya tienen sus esposos de ese lado entonces por eso los varones qué dicen a mí, soy una feminista, que estoy dando una arma a las mujeres. Que chuta, entonces piensan eso. Pero en la realidad a alguien que se quiere hay que tratar de ayudar para qué, porque en nuestra comunidad no se permite los divorcios, no se permite las separaciones... Entonces, por eso debemos dar alguna alternativa, alguna solución para estar en armonía familiar.* Interview: Cañar, 29 November 2010.

who does not like injustice; I am a woman who does not like to be manipulated easily.<sup>447</sup>

Urpi knew that there was an alternative to her domestic situation and she made it her responsibility to find a solution, rather than suffer an abusive environment. This shows assertiveness and confidence, on her part, in addition to loyalty to her husband. In turn, she used this experience to help her community, to encourage fellow villagers and acted as an example to other women. Therefore, using her *power within*, Urpi aimed to generate *power with* and *power to* amongst her surrounding collectivity. I asked Urpi more about her experience of working with women. She referred to creating self-esteem, which I in turn asked her to expand on:

... we have given workshops, therapies, we share with *compañeras* who have low self-esteem, maybe due to problems at home, in the family, so they are unmotivated, lifeless, maybe their husband doesn't help their studies, or doesn't let them work. You have to battle, you have to work, you have to dedicate yourself, cheer up, study, and then you can become motivated with life. But if there isn't anyone to help you, then psychologically they have low self-esteem, saying that they 'aren't of value, aren't important to their husband, that's why he doesn't support me, my life is this, my job is that'... The man is practically empowering himself alone, not letting the wife share in it, considering her as private property, telling her what she shouldn't be. But, if we respect each other, then we can both decide.<sup>448</sup>

Urpi's response here referred directly to the notion of *power with*, helping women who struggle and who have low self-confidence to understand their situation and locate a way to generate change. It also reflects how Urpi understands dynamics in

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<sup>447</sup> ...la responsabilidad, es de, que demostrar eso, quizás ese calor familiar que tengo yo en mi hogar, también demostrar ese, esa confianza más que todo a la gente, a la mujer, a mis compañeros varones también. Trabajar conjuntamente haciendo un equipo, buscando algún beneficio para todos, no solamente para ciertas personas, no solamente para ciertos grupillos, sino, para todos. Eso, no, porque en el hogar hay ciertos lugares que dan privilegio a dos hijos o una hija, no hay esa igualdad. En cambio yo he luchado eso, no, también a la sociedad a mi comunidad. Eso creo que me ha dado ánimo de seguir adelante. Soy una mujer que no me gustan las injusticias, soy una mujer que no me gusta que me manipulen fácilmente. Interview: Cañar, 29 November 2010.

<sup>448</sup> hemos dado charlas, hemos dado algunas terapias, compartimos con algunas compañeras que tienen esta baja autoestima no, quizás por muchas cosas que pasen en el hogar, en la familia, entonces se ve medio bajoneadas, medio desmotivadas, medio desanimadas, quizás el esposo no ayuda en el estudio, quizás no les deja que trabajen, en ese campo, entonces hay que luchar, tienes que trabajar, tienes que estudiar, tienes que dedicar, animate, estudíate, entonces ya uno se va motivando y animando, pero si es que no hay nadie, alguien que ayude, entonces ellas psicológicamente están con baja autoestima, bueno dicen: 'Bueno yo no le importo a nadie, yo no importo ni a mi marido, por eso no me apoya, yo mi tarea es esto, mi vida es esto'. Allí prácticamente está empoderando solo el varón pues no, quizás ya no está dejando que comparta a su mujer, entonces está considerando como una propiedad privada, él da decidiendo por ella de lo que no debería ser, no, entonces si es que respetamos, entonces ya debemos decidir ambos. Interview: Cañar, 29 November 2010.



conjugal relationships, maybe through personal experience or observations of others.

Several weeks after I first interviewed Urpi, she became the first female Director of DIPEIB-Cañar, an apparently impressive role to have acquired. Seven months later I interviewed Urpi again, wishing to ask her about this experience.<sup>449</sup> Urpi explained that she had already accomplished success in her new post, such as maintaining the department in good administrative and financial standing and making it a reference point for other provinces. However, she had also encountered resistance from her colleagues:<sup>450</sup>

... the province was ahead of the new law that the government was implementing; it appears that the government maybe said, 'well, we are going to take this leader here'. Here I am, but [pause], with the same indigenous way of thinking. Maybe it could be considered obscure to work that way, forming alliance with the government. But indigeneity is always in my heart and mind. Especially as the trajectory of our leaders has been to establish the organisation, and we have organised and fought. But many people are not in agreement with me and think I am directly with the government. But it is definitely not that. I have said sometimes, "I could leave now, but I also have to press ahead, with this institution"... I said, "I'm going to see what the administration is like. What is happening?"

My greatest challenge in this work is to keep going. I mean, to not have resentment, to not hate, to not be embarrassed, as a mother and woman. To humble myself of many things and to ignore things. That, and to keep working for the people. Many people here say, "but you don't communicate, you don't tell us where you're going, we don't know where you are". But from morning to night, they tell you that you have to be in Quito, you have to be Cuenca, you have to be in the community... Sometimes there's no time to tell anyone, not even my family.

So here I am with these experiences. My conscience and mind is relaxed. I need to work like this, in order to pass on my culture to the young people, to

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<sup>449</sup> Urpi had recently returned from a trip to the United Nations in New York in May 2011. This was another instigator for me to interview her again, as I wished to ask her about that particular experience too.

<sup>450</sup> I had heard rumours amongst the Cañari that Urpi had obtained this role as a consequence of being friends with the new National Director of EIB, rather than through a formal application process to the job. This had caused tensions in the DIPEIB-C amongst colleagues, as many people were not in agreement with this methodology. Later interviewees provided me with their opinions on Urpi's position, without me having to ask. Nevertheless, regardless of how Urpi had accessed the position, it was a noteworthy achievement that held a significant amount of responsibility; one that I wished to ask her about.

new generations; above all to the women... we have to work. More than anything now, we have to unite our strength and work.<sup>451</sup>

Through discussing this topic Urpi provides further insight into her character, particularly as a public figure. While aware of the disagreements that existed within the Cañari community concerning her new role, and regardless of the procedure undertaken to obtain the appointment, she did not allow this to prevent her from performing the job. She was motivated to overcome people's attitudes and carry out the best leadership possible for EIB and indigenous people in the province. Urpi knows internally that she is not attempting to betray the indigenous population, despite how others may view her. Equally, she acknowledged her busy schedule, but highlighted how she is trying to set an example for other women and the next generation through hard work. It was also clear that her job gave much satisfaction:

I am the first woman in this role. This experience for me has been nice; to meet new people, a new working environment, new colleagues, new friendships, to go out to places I hadn't had the opportunity to go to before. To learn lots of things, begin reading again, to continue professional training, develop new skills. In Quilloac School, where the school administration is already established, it is conformist there. Here you have to get to know the Ministry, the resolutions and laws I have to keep. If it were possible, I'd read night and day, to know what to do and comply with the law.<sup>452</sup>

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<sup>451</sup> ... la provincia que estaba enfrente a la nueva ley que esta dando el gobierno y todo, y parece que por allí tal vez el gobierno dijo pues "a esta dirigente vamos a liderar acá". Estoy aquí, pero, [pausa] con el mismo pensamiento de ser indígena. Tal vez pueda ser vidrio de estrategia trabajar así, aliando con el gobierno, pero en mi pensamiento, en mi corazón está pues de ser indígena como hemos organizado, como ha sido esa lucha, como ha sido esa trayectoria de nuestros dirigentes, daban formación a las organizaciones y tanta cosa. Y mucha gente no esta de acuerdo conmigo, piensa que yo soy directamente con el gobierno, pero no es eso, no, no es eso. He dicho, "bueno, por mí pueda irme aborita", pero también acá tengo que valar por esta plan, esta institución... Dije "bueno, voy a ver como es el administrativo, como es? Que esta pasando?"... el desafío mío más grande de este trabajo es seguir adelante, o sea no tener ese resentimiento, no tener este odio, no tener esa vergüenza, tal vez como madre y mujer pues. Humillar muchas cosas, no dar importancia. Eso, y seguir trabajando, seguir trabajando por la gente. Mucha gente acá diga "pero no comunicas, no avisas adonde te vas, no sabemos donde estás", pero de noche a la mañana de que comunican que tienes que estar en Quito, que tienen que estar en Cuenca, que tienen que estar en pueblo, no sé qué, pues... No hay tiempo a veces ni de avisar a nadie en mi familia... Entonces estoy en esas realidades. Mi conciencia, mi mente esta tranquila de que debo trabajar así, para dejar la cultura a mi gente joven, y gente renaciente, más que todo las mujeres... tenemos que trabajar, más que nunca ahora tenemos que unir nuestras fuerzas y trabajar. Interview: Cañar, 22 June 2011.

<sup>452</sup> Soy la primera mujer aquí. Esta experiencia para mi ha sido algo lindo, de conocer nueva gente, nuevo ambiente de trabajo, nuevos compañeros, nuevas amistades, tal vez de salir a lugares donde no he tenido esa oportunidad de salir, de aprender muchas cosas, de nuevamente de retomar la lectura, de seguir preparando de abunde, comenzar a manejar las nuevas tecnologías. De que, tal vez en la escuela, con la dirigencia de la escuela ya esta conformada, conformista allí no más. Pero acá se requiere saber a cuál ministeriales, las resoluciones, leyes, en las leyes tengo que hacer. Si fuera posible leer noches y días para estar al tanto, para hacer y cumplir que está en la ley. Interview: Cañar, 22 June 2011.

The post is forcing the acquisition of new skills and further professional development, which she appears to be revelling in, demonstrating her gusto for learning. One important question I had for Urpi, however, concerned how she perceived husband, Alejandro, felt about her public responsibilities:

Well, he [her husband] says that he had never dreamt of it. He has said, “our objective was that someday maybe we would be professionals. Never did I think that you would arrive at this position, in this place”. Having taken my husband to the rehabilitation centre, I lead in everything, I have initiative in everything. So he said, ‘well, in that therapy they commented that the people who help others more have their rewards, and maybe it’s this’... thanks to my husband, he understands, as he is no longer sick, alcoholic. He gives me space, he supports me, saying, “well, now that you are there, it’s like when you helped me. So now, it is a time when more than ever I will support you, illuminating that trust and more. I have known you thirty years; I can trust you in your activities”.<sup>453</sup>

Urpi clearly considers Alejandro to be encouraging of her and providing with reciprocal help. However, with two children living in Cuenca, Urpi also recognised that her commitments have had an impact on them.<sup>454</sup> Even though they are grown up and have left the family home, creating increased opportunities for Urpi to be involved in more community related work, she commented: ‘... they say, “we come here from Cuenca on Saturdays and you are not here, you’re in Quito or in the community. It’s better not to go to Cañar”. This worries me, but I say “no, I am opening up spaces for you”’.<sup>455</sup> Thus, although Urpi has freedom and autonomy within her family structure, it also seems that her children still have expectations of her as a mother, which has the potential to create conflicts over her domestic-public roles.

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<sup>453</sup> Bueno, él dice pues, de que nunca ha sonado él, nunca ha pensado, él ha dicho “bueno, en algún tiempo quizás seamos unos profesionales y eso era el objetivo de nosotros. Nunca pensé que te ibas a llegar a este cargo, ese lugar, Dios te ha dado estas fuerzas”, porque creo que te conté de lo que lleve a mi esposo al centro de rehabilitación. Entonces en todo lidero, en todo tengo esa iniciativa en todo. Entonces dice “pues, en esa terapia dice la gente que ayúdalos más tiene su recompensa, y tal vez, es eso”... Gracias a mi esposo, de lo que comprende por que ya no es enfermo, alcohólico, y él da espacios, me apoya, él dice “bueno, pues, ya que estás allí, así como has acompañada a mí entonces ahora es cuando más que nunca daré apoyo, esa confianza a iluminar, y más que todo, dicho de que como ya le conozco los treinta años, comportamiento de ti, ya tengo esta confianza, entonces puedo dejar donde que estés”. Interview: Cañar, 22 June 2011.

<sup>454</sup> Urpi has another son, who migrated to the USA when he was fifteen.

<sup>455</sup> ... dicen “pero mama, vinimos nosotros de Cuenca los sábados, no estas, estas en Quito, que estas en la comunidad. Mejor no ganas de ir a Cañar”. Eso me preocupa también, pero digo “no, yo estoy abriendo espacio para Uds.”. Interview: Cañar, 22 June 2011.

Having received Urpi's view of how she thought Alejandro felt about her new job, it was important to hear from Alejandro too. Was Urpi's perception correct?:

You see Hannah, lovely things have happened in my family... I mean without having dreamt, my wife went to work there. Why? Because a good friend went to work in the National Department. She took Urpi there, but you see this caused some irritation in certain groups... But in the success, let's say, she [Urpi] is more so demonstrating that if you study, you advance. If you make sacrifices, like she sometimes has, but not so much for the money, you can undertake these roles. You can acquire and perform this job... she is showing the indigenous and Hispanic community that she has made progress... She is demonstrating that, as a mother, as a wife, as an indigenous leader, she too has risen from below. She too can do work for the good of all, for the good of the people.<sup>456</sup>

Alejandro therefore concurred what Urpi had told me, although he was also aware of the negative feelings he has at times too. Nonetheless, he recognised the need to understand:<sup>457</sup>

... it has impacted me a little, like a rage has arisen in me slightly... because she goes to events, to other communities, other cantons, and arrives at 11 pm, 1 am; "Alejandro you know I am here, I am doing this thing". This has made me irritated and I want to say, "meeting until those hours is an exaggeration". The meetings ALWAYS happen at night in the communities... but I have to be a husband instead of dismissing her, instead of saying, "where have you been? What have you been doing?" I have to support her, help, and support in the moral sense.<sup>458</sup>

The reciprocal connection that Urpi appears to now have with Alejandro, following his therapy and their improved conjugal relationship, has enabled Urpi to

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<sup>456</sup> *Vea Hannab, en mi familia ha ocurrido cosas lindisimas... o sea sin haber soñado, mi mujer fue a trabajar allá. Por qué? Porque había sido muy amiga de una compañera que así mismo subió para trabajar en la dirección nacional. Ella lo llevo allá, pero sabe que eso causó un malestar en cierto grupo... Pero en los éxitos, digamos, mas bien ella está demostrando de que, o sea, una se estudia, uno avanza. Uno sacrifica, y alguna vez tiene, no tanto por el sueldo sino también pueden llegar a esos puestos, pueden llegar a ese trabajo, desempeñar funciones... está demostrando al pueblo indígena, también al pueblo hispanohablante, de que ella ha avanzado... esta demostrando de que como madre, como esposa, como una dirigente indígena, que también ha surgido desde abajo, también puede llegar a trabajar por el bien de los demás, por el bien de la gente.* Interview: Cañar, 21 July 2011.

<sup>457</sup> Alejandro worked in human resources at Instituto Quilloac, therefore aware of the context Urpi was working in and the types of demands that she was met with.

<sup>458</sup> *... me ha impactado un poquito, como que me ha querido venir un poco de rabia, un poco de sentimiento ...porque ella va a eventos, a otras comunidades, a otras cantones y viene a las 11 de la noche, 1 de la mañana: "Alejandro, sabes que estoy en tal parte, estoy haciendo tal cosa". Pero eso como que me ha venido a querer molestar, a querer decir bueno pues al fin, "qué exageración hasta estas horas". Pero las reuniones llevan al cabo las noches, las comunidades SIEMPRE son las noches, entonces, pero qué tengo que hacer como esposo en vez de reprochar, en ves de decir "bueno, de donde vienes? Que estabas haciendo?", YO tengo que apoyarle, yo tengo que apoyar, ayudar, apoyar moralmente en el sentido.* Interview: Cañar, 21 July 2011

pursue a leadership role as EIB Director with his support. It is also clear that Urpi gained strength through the difficulties she endured with her husband's alcoholism, using it to improve her life rather than let it overcome her. While there is no direct link made between these events and empowerment by Urpi, it can nevertheless be suggested that these life experiences have influenced her ability to undertake public responsibilities in an empowering way. In her first interview, Urpi stated that:

Empowerment for me is to work equally in everything, at home, in the family, society, employment environment, without someone being more or someone being less... Empowerment is working together equally with transparency, with loyalty. If there is something, then it is for everyone. If there isn't then nobody has it. That, I believe is empowerment. But many people think empowerment is about empowering the individual, over others. But if I were to be at the top of everyone and say, "but I am from the same group of people", then I should be at the same level, in the same place as them. So that harmony can exist within the family, the community, in everything... In the community you can usually see the empowerment that someone has, if someone who has fought, for example, against the injustice that they experience. Someone who participates in the communities, who gets emotional when "this is bad, this is good..."<sup>459</sup>

Reading between the lines, for Urpi, empowerment is about fighting against injustice and searching for equality for the collective. This links into discussions concerning, for example, the indigenous movement and its focus on collective rights rather than individual rights, as highlighted in section 6.1. When made publicly visible, someone undertaking this goal could be viewed, from Urpi's perspective, as an 'empowered' person. Along this line of thought, in an interview with Delfina, a member of another village in Cañar, Urpi's community role and focus on the collective was acknowledged:

...she has done many things, always thinking of the young people, about the whole community... a person like this that has sacrificed a lot, lets say... Always looked for the well-being of everyone. I cannot say that of many people who do that in my community... the majority are looking out for

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<sup>459</sup> *Empoderamiento para mí sería de en todo campo, en hogar, en familia, en sociedad, en el campo del trabajo, trabajar en igualdad, trabajar en igualdad, no que haiga unos más y unos menos ...el empoderamiento de trabajar en igualdad, con transparencia, con igualdad, con equidad, con lealtad, o sea, todos ser iguales, no hay unos más, ni unos menos, si es que hay algo, para todos, si es que no hay, para nadie que no haiga, entonces con eso creo que existe el empoderamiento, pero si no hay, si no hay esas estrategias no hay para mi empoderamiento, a lo mejor mucha gente piensa, empoderamiento es empoderar solamente el yo, a las demás, pero como que yo estuviera arriba de los demás, entonces yo en cambio digo no, soy de la misma gente, debo estar en el mismo lugar, en el mismo sitio donde ellos, entonces para que exista esa armonía en la familia, en la comunidad en todo en la comunidad uno más o menos ve ese empoderamiento que uno se tiene, una que ha luchado por ejemplo a través, por las injusticias que se ve, uno por ejemplo ya se participa en las comunidades, ya se mociona que "esto está mal, esto está bien"... Interview: Cañar, 29 November 2010.*

themselves... they build an irrigation canal, they build a communal meeting house, but always looking to see where they can take more for themselves... there are material things they have done, but in half-heartedly.<sup>460</sup>

Given Delfina's description and how Urpi thinks of the good of the community, in addition to how Urpi considers fighting for equality for all as empowerment, it can be argued that Urpi's struggle against an unhappy home life and search for better health for her husband proved significant factors in her empowerment process and engagement with public spaces. She took her empowering qualities from the domestic arena into the public domain as a leader, in order to empower the collective; both men and women. In specific relation to women, she said, 'we are sowing a grain of sand for women, that they may also begin to lead in more communities'.<sup>461</sup>

### ***Maritza – A Legal Adviser and Provincial Assembly Candidate***

Maritza was born in the early 1970s, the second of four children, with three brothers. From a very young age, Maritza had wanted to work with women, as she was concerned about what was going to happen to her generation. This anxiety was due to the fact that 'most women in past decades had been housewives and nothing more'.<sup>462</sup> Maritza came to the conclusion that 'the only weapon is to prepare yourself'.<sup>463</sup> In other words, you have to become educated.

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<sup>460</sup> *Ha hecho muchas cosas, siempre pensando en lo que es en la, en la juventud, en toda la comunidad mismo... una persona así que, que ha sacrificado bastante digamos... Siempre ha buscado el bienestar cada uno de ellos. Y no puedo decir que tal persona hizo esto por la comunidad... decir así en mi comunidad, en mi comunidad no se podría... la mayoría siempre buscando para ellos..., construyeron el canal de riego, este, construyeron la casa comunal, pero siempre buscando de dónde sacar más para ellos... hay cosas materiales que se han hecho pero a la mitad.* Interview: Cuenca, 10 February 2011.

In context to Delfina's observation, Uphoff notes that: 'While strong leadership can make an organization more powerful and more effective, it also increases the likelihood that the organization will serve the interests of a minority rather than those of the majority members... Solidarity is an important factor in enhancing the power of the poor because it allows all available resources to be concerted toward common objectives rather than being dissipated or negated by conflict. Leadership of course can play a key role in forging and maintaining solidarity, while division and factionalism is usually a reflection of competition between leadership elements. It is often thought that social heterogeneity makes conflicts more likely, diminishing group power' (2005: 235-236).

<sup>461</sup> *...ya estamos ya quizás ya sembrando un granito de arena para que las mujeres también comiencen a liderar demás comunidades.* Interview: Cañar, 29 November 2010.

<sup>462</sup> *... en las décadas anteriores las mujeres únicamente éramos amas de casa y no más.* Interview: Cañar, 21 February 2011.

<sup>463</sup> *... la única herramienta arma es prepararse.* Interview: Cañar, 21 February 2011.

When Maritza's father died when she was eleven, she helped her mother sustain their family; 'coordinating, working, and talking between us, we began a new phase of life'.<sup>464</sup> Her father was not educated but had been a community leader in Quilloac. Following his death and example, Maritza attended village meetings and acted as her family's voice:

In my childhood and adolescence I dedicated myself to becoming involved in the organisation and making decisions in place of my father. I went to meetings to see what happened, how the organisation was led. This allowed me to get involved, pursue a career and decide for myself. It strengthened me a lot. I admired how [women] spoke, what they did. I said, 'how do they arrive at doing that? What do you need to do?'<sup>465</sup>

The passing of her father, therefore, gave Maritza a lease of life and motivation towards a vocation. In her late teens Maritza began working with indigenous women in Cañar via the indigenous organisation, which was supported by CESA at the time. She explained:

The indigenous organisation called me to see if I wanted to work with women. I presented my CV and won the post. I worked there for four years. During this time CESA obtained a scholarship for me to go to Panama and study cooperativism. So I left for three months. Upon return I continued working directly for CESA as an employee. We created a rural development project here in Cañar, and I was a researcher with the indigenous organisation in that process, carrying out investigations into the organisations in Cañar, what they should do etc.<sup>466</sup>

Maritza further outlined her work with indigenous women via CESA and its outcome:

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<sup>464</sup> ...para coordinar, trabajar, y dialogar los dos y así iniciamos así nueva etapa de vida. Interview: Cañar, 21 February 2011.

<sup>465</sup> ...en mi niñez y juventud más bien me dediqué a meterme en la organización en vez de mi papá ya tomar decisiones. Ir a las reuniones a ver qué pasa, como manejaban la organización. Eso me ha permitido de que yo pueda desenvolver y tomar una carrera y decidir por mi misma ¿no? Me fortaleció bastante. Yo admiraba como hablaban, que hacían. Entonces yo decía: ¿Cómo, cómo hacer a llegar a llegar a eso? ¿Qué debía hacer? Interview: Cañar, 21 February 2011.

<sup>466</sup> ... la organización campesina me llamaron para que trabaje con mujeres, y presente mi carpeta y gané en el concurso. Y inicié trabajar ahí, ahí trabajé unos cuatro años. Entonces ahí yo entré a trabajar y estuve trabajando no sé que me dieron, que no sé qué hacían pero la institución con el que trabajábamos, la organización la Central Ecuatoriana de Servicio Agrícola CESA. Ellos habían conseguido una beca para ir a estudiar en Panamá sobre cooperativismo. Entonces habían enviado mi nombre y aprobó en Panamá y salí por tres meses a Panamá. Regresé y seguía trabando en la organización, y la institución que me envió a prepararme en Panamá quería contratarme ya como empleada de, de esa institución y ya no como servicio de la organización. En esos se armó un proyecto de desarrollo rural integral aquí en el Cañar y en ese proceso de investigación ya participé como miembro de la organización, no como institución en colaboración para--bagan las investigaciones de como es la situación en Cañar, como están las organizaciones, que debían hacer. Interview: Cañar, 21 February 2011.

My intention, my whole life, has been that women take up new roles, new challenges... My work was in helping women breed guinea pigs, pigs, chickens etc. for their families... From there women of all ages began to meet, participating in protest marches, organising events... Since the haciendas disappeared after agrarian reform there had not been a female leader. Only since 1998, the 2000s have there been opportunities for women. So our fight has been more about why women cannot be president, make decisions and lead an organisation.<sup>467</sup>

In an interview with CEPLAES in 1998, Maritza was asked if it was easier to be a leader as a man or woman. She replied:

It is much easier to be a male leader, because it is easier for men to go out. As women we have to stay at home, with the children and house. It is a limitation; we have an overload of work. There is now understanding and there is support from men, but for the delicateness of being a woman, we cannot abandon the home or work (CEPLAES, 1998: 6).

When asked how to strengthen women's political involvement, she suggested creating micro-businesses in order to help families economically. These activities took advantage of the little time that women had, while giving space to talk about political participation.<sup>468</sup> By generating spheres of support via productive enterprises that generate income for the family, 'woman can get out of this problem' of excess work (1998: 7). Maritza did not feel that it was necessary to provide training solely in leadership, but to combine it with other aspects of women's lives so that they would become more involved in the community and family, 'to generate new processes' (1998: 7). For women to increase their engagement, Maritza suggested that there needed to be equality in sharing domestic responsibilities so that women had more time to devote to training; men needed educating in this regard in order to better understand the situation. She stated she had observed unmarried women become

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<sup>467</sup> *mi intención toda la vida ha sido de que las mujeres vayamos asumiendo nuevos roles, nuevos retos... Yo en la crianza de animales menores, taller de formación socio-organizativo. Eso era y, y de paso trabajar con la comunidad. Eso fue la actividad que yo tuve. Abí teníamos crianza de cuyes, de chanchos, de gallinas, puercos para la familia... desde abí iniciamos un poco las mujeres reunirse, salir al ocho de marzo, en esos, en esos salíamos a hacer la manifestación marcha un corro-discusión en este tema, concretamente hacíamos. Reuníamos jóvenes, señoras, de todo edad, y organizábamos eventos. El desfile del primero de mayo abí estuvimos mujeres así... desde, desde que desapareció el--las haciendas de la reforma agraria desde el 64, hasta estos años no ha habido ningún dirigente mujer. Únicamente ya hay en las décadas de 98, 2000 habían ya dignidades. Entonces nuestra lucha ha sido más bien porque no llegar a la ser presidente, tomar decisiones y conducir el destino de una organización.* Interview: Cañar, 21 February 2011.

<sup>468</sup> My assumption is that this idea came from her work with CESA, besides being linked to the fact that women financially sustain the family by caring for animals (CEPLAES, 1998: 6).



leaders and sometimes a problem that occurred after marriage was that women stayed at home:

I cannot say what the limitation is or what the problem is. I think that it's maybe about how a couple understands one another... I mean, before and after marriage. They don't confront these things. That is where I think there is a risk of becoming a housewife and nothing more... (1998: 8).

Bearing this in mind, the matter of partnership is an interesting point to reflect on in relation to Maritza's role in the Cañari community. She has never married. In the past, Quilloac has proposed that she act as their leader, but she has turned it down due to another commitment – motherhood:

... they have come to me and proposed it, but I have never accepted. Simply because I have a three-year-old son and he is still little. I have to be available for him. That has been a great limitation. When they previously asked me, I found studying and being in the organisation difficult as there isn't any way to do the two concurrently. I never accepted. At best, sometime I will accept. I don't think it will be difficult.<sup>469</sup>

Maritza decided she wanted to have a child of her own accord, and fell pregnant as she was finishing her law degree. According to Judy, however, no one knows who the father is, nor did she have a partner at the time of interview. Being a single mother out of choice is therefore a significant break from the rules within Cañari culture, demonstrating a deep level of self-confidence and ability to challenge existing cultural norms. Maritza graduated just hours before giving birth to her son. Consequently, instead of taking formal responsibility for grassroots leadership, Maritza has supported indigenous communities in indigenous justice, and has acted as an adviser to fellow Cañari people, particularly to women leaders in Quilloac. This is as a consequence of becoming the first female Cañari lawyer.

I asked Maritza what had motivated her to study law. Her previous experience working for CESA was the biggest incentive:

I worked in water management, legalisation of communities, undertaking micro-business development. I had to carry out formal procedures. Here, the lawyers always told me before carrying out the paperwork that 'this is costly'. So I was surprised, as they said, 'it costs this much', and I'd say, 'why can't I

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<sup>469</sup> ... viniendo a mí me han propuesto que sea dirigente pero yo nunca he aceptado. Porque simple y llanamente yo tengo un, un niño de tres años y tengo--todavía es pequeño y tengo que estar pendiente con él. Eso ha sido el gran limitante. Veces anteriores igual me han propuesto pero como, estudiar y estar en la organización no hay como hacer las dos cosas a la vez, tampoco he aceptado. A lo mejor alguna vez acepte, estaré, creo que no va a ser difícil. Interview: Cañar, 21 February 2011.

do this? I am capable too'. So that job made me decide to undertake law as a profession. I have always been argumentative and a fighter for a cause.<sup>470</sup>

Thus, it was the unjust costs of paperwork for the indigenous communities that prompted her higher education. She also referred to her father as influencing her decision to return to study in later life: 'He said, "No, you have to study". And my father's dream was that I be a doctor'.<sup>471</sup> Although Maritza was evidently independent about her choice of subject, her father played a part in her educational process, despite his absence when she began university.

Since establishing her legal practice, Maritza has used her profession to support indigenous people in Cañar without financial resources or who have encountered legal problems, which in turn has helped her establish a recognised role within the community:

60-70 per cent of my work is for people who have no money. At times I have charged some, but not for the paperwork... This is my support, which people have acknowledged. Therefore the community has supported me so that I can continue working.<sup>472</sup>

Equally, Maritza has aided the leadership in Quilloac through her professional expertise; especially women leaders:

In 2004-05, Nuna was the first female president of Quilloac cooperative. So I was with her in that administration, supporting, documenting decisions, and giving legal advice... Our intention as women is more so to see the reality, like at home, and do it similarly in the organisation. It is much wider. It is more participatory, making decisions together. Not like men, they often make very drastic decisions. And lately Urpi took up the leadership of the community. I was also with her, using my profession. I told her, 'if my modest knowledge is going to support you then I am here to help. Trust me'. And so Urpi cleverly knew to take advantage of this. I have told them and continue to say, "the few things that one knows can prepare the way for the organisation". The few experiences that I have I can share with others. As you may not always be in the community, be alive. Anything could happen. But the things and how they should evolve, I want them to know and learn.

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<sup>470</sup> ... *yo trabajé en juntas de agua; legalización de comunidades, manejábamos micro empresas pequeñas. Necesitaba hacer trámites en este. Y yo me iba a hacer y yo siempre antes acá los abogados para iniciar cualquier trámite dicen: Esto cuesta. El trámite. Entonces a mi me causó sorpresa a veces decían que vale esto, y decía ¿porqué uno no puede hacer eso? Porque yo igual puedo hacer. Entonces eso es el trabajo mismo me hizo que yo tomé la decisión de ir a coger la carrera de derecho y yo siempre he sido peleona y luchar por la causa.* Interview: Cañar, 21 February 2011.

<sup>471</sup> ... *decía: No, tienes que estudiar y el sueño de mi papá fue que yo sea médico.* Interview: Cañar, 21 February 2011.

<sup>472</sup> *En, en 60-70% yo he apoyado a gente que no tiene dinero. Terminando el piso he cobrado algunos inclusive he hecho gratis el trámite... Eso es apoyo de mi parte y eso han reconocido la gente. Y por eso la comunidad como tal ha apoyado para que yo siga trabajando.* Interview: Cañar, 21 February 2011.

In this case, the administration of indigenous justice has been carried out well in Quilloac. I have always been present, explaining how they should do it, what tools they need. So this has allowed Urpi to strengthen herself a bit, make decisions. She has done a good job as leader... Moreover they called her to take up the challenge of the Bilingual Education Department. She consulted me, and I said, “Urpi, I believe you are capable of doing it. Demonstrate now how we women can do things by exhibiting it”.<sup>473</sup>

Clearly Maritza, through her own process of empowerment, has been able to aid others, particularly women in Quilloac, to work for communal benefit. Maritza has always worked for the community. Her narrative never indicated that she was solely looking out for her own interests. This indicates that the ideological basis to the indigenous organisation, both locally and nationally, is deeply rooted in Maritza’s heart; that she must work for the good of the indigenous collective. Maritza has a deep consciousness of justice and rights, and appears to have had a great sense of what was needed for change to occur from a very young age due to the death of her father and opportunity to engage with community issues. She has fought for her community members in a number of ways. She has broken traditions and continues to succeed professionally, using “power” at multiple levels in varying scenarios.

Since Maritza’s interview with CEPLAES in 1998, she has undergone significant processes with regards to her public role in the Cañari milieu, which are particularly associated with her education and chosen profession. She has not encountered tensions by way of conjugal issues, but recognises having her son has placed an element of restriction on things she may have otherwise assumed

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<sup>473</sup> ... en el año 2004, 2005, pues la compañera Nuna fue primera presidenta de la cooperativa, Quilloac. Entonces en esa administración estuve igual con ella apoyando, fortaleciendo en toma de decisiones como debía ser, o sea, asesorando en otros términos a la compañera... Pero nuestra intención como mujeres es más bien ver la realidad como es en la casa y algo similar hacer en la organización, es más, más amplia. Es más participativa, las tomas de decisiones es conjuntas. No como los hombres, muchas veces son muy drásticamente las cosas se toman, así. Entonces últimamente la compañera Urpi ha asumido la dirigencia de la comunidad, igual ese rato estuve ella con mi profesión le dije, “si es que, mis modestos conocimientos en algo va a apoyar a Urpi estoy dispuesta en colaborar. Y, cuéntenme conmigo”, y entonces la Urpi hábilmente supo aprovechar y eso yo les he dicho y sigo diciendo: “Pocas cosas que uno sabe y a uno, a prepararles el trayecto de la organización. Esas pocas de experiencias que yo tengo puedo compartir a todos”. Porque uno no es permanente en la comunidad en la vida. Cualquier cosa puede pasar y yo puedo salir e irme a otro lado cualquier cosa. Pero las cosas como deberían marchar quiero que sepan y aprendan y en este caso la administración de justicia indígena que hacen en Quilloac lo han hecho muy bien. Y siempre he estado presente ahí que como tienen que hacer; que deben hacer, cuales son las herramientas que tienen que llevar. Entonces un poco eso le ha permitido de quiere la Urpi como persona fortaleza, toma decisiones, y ha sido un buen--ha desempeñado buen papel como dirigente. más bien le llaman para que asuma el reto de, de la dirección, de educación bilingüe. Entonces igual me consultó, dije “Urpi, creo que estas en capacidad como para asumir. Demuestra ese momento donde que las mujeres podemos demostrar y hacer, y, y demostrar con hechos pues en la práctica”. Interview: Cañar, 21 February 2011.

responsibility for. Nevertheless, it is clear that Maritza has achieved a level of empowerment, leadership and recognition as a consequence of her professional activities in recent years.<sup>474</sup>

## ***Conclusion***

This chapter has provided insight into the lives of indigenous women, especially in Cañar, who have engaged in public spaces via a number of different mechanisms and structures. Each narrative is individual and unique, yet there are a number of factors that reappear in many cases. The most noticeable is the issue of education. While some of these women, such as Willka and Nuna, did not access formal education structures in the same way the other participants have, education has played a role in all of their personal narratives, which has led them into the public arena. The subject of Monsignor Proaño arises in three cases, highlighting his significance in the socio-cultural development of the geographical area.

In many cases, women's educational involvement has been through groups or projects that have taken on a face akin to non-formal education; either the participants have been partakers initially, or have been the facilitators of the groups. On this latter point, Asiri and Urpi directly link the topic of empowerment to being facilitators in the empowerment of others. Noticeably, the example of the leadership school connects to Asiri's drive and passion for working with indigenous women and finding ways to work with them in an acceptable manner within the indigenous movement. Those that have participated in this school have in turn been facilitators themselves, once returning to their communities and organisations.

In this sense, there is an air of 'working together' as a collective, in consciousness-raising or skills based training, that runs throughout the chapter. This idea of collective action links back into the initial discussion concerning the

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<sup>474</sup> In 2012 Maritza was made a provincial deputy candidate for the Movimiento PAIS, Patria, Altiva I Soberana in Cañar, for elections to be held in 2013 (Consejo Nacional Electoral, 2012). This further demonstrates the level of recognition Maritza has in Cañar, not only at village level, but also provincially. Through recent correspondence with Judy, I came to understand that the local PAIS party won in 2013, so Maritza became an alternate MP. She now spends several weeks a year in Quito, seemingly content with her new political and busy life. Her mother and sister help to look after her son. What is curious here, however, is that politically, Maritza is acting outside of the indigenous party that the local mayor belongs to, Pachacutik. The mayor was reelected by a good margin, as all indigenous communities in Cañar support him. (Personal Communication: Judy, 17 May 2014).

indigenous movement and its aim to generate collective communication between both genders. Willka's narrative stands alone to some degree vis-à-vis educational development, as her story is focused on the growth of her inner power via informal learning, yet the outcome of that is also aimed at others and helping individuals heal. Thus, although her skills are specific to her, she nonetheless uses them to the benefit of the collective. Nor has being illiterate prevented her from becoming involved in public matters.

There is also the theme of familial history of leadership to consider. Here the most significant case is the example of the three sisters, Asiri, Willka and Flor, a point highlighted and discussed above. In addition, it was Maritza's father being a leader that enabled her to begin a process of empowerment following his death. In the case of Urpi and Nuna, while they do not allude directly to it, there is evidence to suggest that their extended family networks have participated in leadership roles, thus suggesting that this might be a factor in their own stories.

Along the vein of family, another issue that has been highlighted in this chapter is the role of spouses, or the absence of spouses, in these women's empowerment processes. For Willka and Flor, whose husbands both died, it appears that this life-changing event led them to engage with public activities on a much wider scale. For Willka, it meant a lot more freedom and autonomy to pursue her vocation. For Flor it pushed her to make sure she could provide for her children and their education. In Nuna's case, she considered not having a partner was an asset to her story. For Urpi, it was her relationship with her husband that acted as a facilitator in instigating awareness of gender issues within the home, which she in turn used to help others in the community and to aid her leadership qualities. Her husband's support since has been a great contributor to Urpi's enthusiasm and strength. For Asiri, being married to a mestizo meant she had more independence, as she did not encounter the same level of jealousy witnessed within some indigenous couples, such as her sister Willka's. Given Asiri's wide-ranging activities, including internationally in Peru, it seems that being married was not a limitation. In Maritza's case, it was the topic of her son that was of greater importance. While she considered being a mother had placed some limitation on what she did and did not decide to do publicly in Cañar, she had instead found other ways to contribute to the community via her profession.

Although this chapter provides a microcosmic study into the lives of indigenous women from Cañar who engage with public spaces, it nonetheless demonstrates how women from this area have, over the years, gained in opportunities to act in positions that were once never considered possible by women. Their stories highlight a number of external factors that seem important to consider in contributing to their processes of empowerment, the outcomes of which are visible in numerous ways. Additionally, there have been parallel processes of empowerment occurring: on an interpersonal level and on a collective level; on a women-only basis, and on a gender-inclusive one. While indigenous women will likely continue to face obstacles to their participation in the future, especially in political spheres, these women have found ways to transcend their various personal hurdles, empowering both themselves and the wider society around them.

## Chapter VII

### Conclusion

It is undeniable that much ink has been spilt in discussing the topic of empowerment amongst both academics and development practitioners. Indeed, the term has been a development ‘buzzword’ since the 1970s. Women in the developing world are frequently referred to as the bearers of poverty, seen to be excluded from numerous socio-economic and political institutions, and subordinated to men. Consequently, there has been much debate over how women in developing countries can overcome their marginalisation and generate positive change to enable greater gender equality and well-being. A central element within discourse and practice has therefore focused on female empowerment.

In essence, as demonstrated in Chapter II, the notion of empowerment is understood to be a process. In summary, a process of empowerment aims to: enable individuals or members of collective groups in subordinate positions to recognise and understand how present relationships of power, particularly in socioeconomic and political structures, place them in their current situation. It requests that they develop confidence and self-esteem in order to challenge and change these power relations in their favour, so that they can achieve well-being, social transformation and a more equitable society between men and women. Other desired outcomes for women include greater levels of agency, independence, decision-making power, and access to employment and income generation opportunities.

In order to confront dynamics of power in society, power itself is at the root of empowerment. Four types of power are believed to exist in processes of female empowerment: *power over*, *power to*, *power with* and *power within* (outlined in Table 2 and 3). While *power with* focuses on women acquiring power to act as a collective, such as through solidarity networks or women’s movements, it is the individual who rests at the heart of empowerment processes, especially in the acquisition of *power over*, *power within* and *power to*. *Power with* can often be seen as a bi-product of the first three powers. As Zapata recalls, female ‘empowerment comes from no external agent but is rather a process that begins within the person and enables her to value herself, change herself, grow and reach more autonomy’ (1999b: 150-151). Scholars such as Stromquist (1995) and Rowlands (1997) produced dimensional frameworks for

analysing processes of empowerment. Stromquist's four dimensions of empowerment include the cognitive, psychological, political and economic, while Rowlands focuses on the personal, relational and collective. The concept of empowerment is also understood as being built upon an access to resources, as the 'pre-condition' to empowerment, and developing agency to generate the capability to act (Kabeer, 1999b). It are these empowerment frameworks that have helped inform this thesis and interpret the data from Cañar.

As described in Chapter III, entering the fieldwork location and beginning to access participants I was presented with a set of issues concerned with power; principally through the researcher-researched dyad. I grappled with the 'messiness' of conducting cross-cultural research, being an "outsider" (western woman) in a "foreign world" (indigenous culture). While I was already aware of the complexities located in these 'positionalities' prior to fieldwork, the hidden agendas of people found within such situations (myself included) had not been anticipated. Remaining reflexive during the process allowed me to reflect on my research questions, interview questions and access strategies, also causing me to reassess my methodology in addressing the topic. It became increasingly evident that talking about 'power' and 'empowerment' was going to be difficult, especially with less educated people. Thus, by altering my interview techniques towards eliciting narratives of individual's lives, the exploratory, interpretivist and phenomenological approach that informed the research became more viable and dynamic.

By asking participants from Cañari communities to talk about different aspects of their lives, it became apparent that there were a number of women that could arguably be considered 'empowered' women. The two main categories that these women fell into were 'higher educated professionals' and 'leaders'. Thus, when analysing the data, the purpose was to identify how these women had become 'empowered'. What processes had they gone through? Were there any influencing factors on those processes of empowerment? What was the outcome of empowerment, both in their lives and for the wider community? What did empowerment mean in a context where pre-Columbian undertones of community solidarity and collectivity were still evident? Having analysed the data and identified several reoccurring themes, I returned to a number of theoretical bodies of literature concerned with processes and avenues for female empowerment. As discussed in



Chapter II, these included: consciousness-raising and popular education, formal education, political empowerment and leadership, besides social capital and human capabilities. By using these theoretical lenses, it has been possible to further understand how the women documented in this thesis have become empowered.

***Pre-conditions of Cañari Women's Empowerment: Consciousness-raising on the hacienda***

In an attempt to locate some of the external 'pre-conditions' and origins of women's empowerment in Cañar, Chapter IV provided an account of Cañar's history and the development of indigenous autonomy following agrarian reform. A noteworthy point to make in relation to this chapter is that, via the empowerment of men in the 1960s, pathways were subsequently opened up for women's advancement.

It has been recognised that when the Spanish colonised the central Andes in the 1500s, they brought with them a set of values, systems and structures that changed the indigenous landscape. Strengthening a system based on patriarchy and male supremacy, altering indigenous men's attitudes towards women's roles and status, the Spanish diminished an established structure of gender relations based on complementarity and *ayni* (Silverblatt, 1980). Likewise, land, a key asset within indigenous life, was expropriated. Indigenous families faced severe exploitation and subordination. Indigenous women became particularly disenfranchised, and their social position became delineated in contrast to that which existed previously within the *ayllu*. In Cañar, Chapter IV documented how the Cañari who lived and worked on hacienda Guantug, a lasting outcome of Spanish colonisation, did not escape the servitude that other Andean indigenous groups in Ecuador experienced during the first half of the twentieth century. *Huasipunguero* families on Guantug were confined to labour contracts on the hacienda, lacking in mobility, agency and autonomy. Indigenous women were physically abused on the hacienda, especially by estate managers. The discrimination and subjugation of indigenous women was subsequently internalised by some, demonstrated through examples of participant's narratives about their mothers and grandmothers. Women accepted the oppression they faced, believing their only purpose was 'to serve' and 'to work', and that they did not deserve better opportunities, such as education. As such, lacking in self-confidence and self-esteem, these women adopted the idea of 'learned helplessness'.

As a result of ‘the sex role socialization’, many women during the hacienda period conformed to ‘female stereotypes of passivity and self-sacrifice’ (Stromquist, 1995: 15). It was only those workers on the hacienda fortunate enough to be free-holding sharecroppers, mainly found within *comuna* Quilloac, who experienced slightly less oppressive working conditions. It was in these cases that Cañari women also gained more freedom in contrast to *huasipunguero* wives.

Although the treatment of women on Guantug was particularly bad, Chapter IV highlighted that Cañari men also suffered at the hands of the hacienda. Consequently, when external actors, specifically young men involved in the Misión Andina (MAE), extended their work to Cañar in 1960, doors opened for the Cañari towards collective empowerment. Drawing on Rowlands idea of ‘groups acting at village or neighbourhood level’ to generate collective empowerment (1997: 15), a number of key male protagonists on Guantug who experienced and understood the existent inequalities and discrimination surrounding them, began a process of awakening and conscientisation amongst themselves and others (La Belle, 1987; Stromquist, 2002). This was paralleled with the presence of Peace Corps volunteers, who were also instrumental in providing supportive structures to the Cañari. Volunteers helped facilitate discussions over the issues the Cañari were facing vis-à-vis the hacienda and land redistribution, and allowed them to identify how they could overcome them. Lastly, an additional noteworthy actor within the conscientisation process of some of the Cañari community is Bishop Proaño and the teachings of liberation theology. Several references are made amongst participant narratives in Chapters IV and VI to either Proaño or liberation theology as significant in their life stories. The presence of priests with liberation theological backgrounds in Cañar at the time of agrarian reform helped support the Cañari in their fight against the hacienda. While this thesis does not allow space for an extensive review of liberation theology, especially as it has been widely discussed elsewhere before, it is notable that various scholars have associated liberation theology with empowerment. Further research is required into this topic vis-à-vis the role of liberation theology in Cañar during the pre-land reform period, yet it is clear from the narratives of participants who became involved in Cañari politics and development that it influenced their individual processes of empowerment, which were subsequently used for collective benefit.

Therefore, through the *power within* of a handful of men, *power with* others and collective empowerment was established that enabled collective action. This was reinforced by women's support for the men in their struggle. The Cañari utilised the external resources (Kabeer, 1999b) available to them via "outsiders", to assist them to fight for their freedom and autonomy from the hacienda system (Sen, 1999). Male members of the Cañari community found agency amongst themselves 'to take action to advance the chosen path' (Petesch et al., 2005: 42) towards establishing agricultural cooperatives in order to manage land received as part of the agrarian reform. As such, they generated the capability to act for change. What is noteworthy here is that much of the academic arguments and theories surrounding female empowerment and locating cognitive and psychological empowerment through consciousness-raising, as provided in Chapter II, can also be applied to men in the Cañari context during the hacienda and agrarian reform era. This, therefore, raises a question over the need to apply discourses of empowerment to the lives of disenfranchised men as well as women.

Although the panacea of development that was directed to southern states by northern nations following WWII has been criticised for not taking women into consideration enough during its initial stages, there is value in recognising that in the Cañari case, the changes that came about as a result of men's actions and empowerment during that time initiated a process of development that generated opportunities for Cañari women into the future. The involvement of women in the agrarian reform in Cañar appears to have been minimal, or at best, was considered as an aspect of the complementary pair via women being supportive of husbands and the "right arm" of men. The lack of women's direct participation on a political level could be associated with the 'learned helplessness' that women experienced at this time, lacking the confidence to become involved. The topic of women's involvement in agrarian reform in this part of Andean Ecuador, however, would benefit from further research in the future. While women such as Nuna (Chapter VI) were active in trying to organise other women on the hacienda, it was following agrarian reform, and the subsequent increased mobility that indigenous people experienced, which appears to have allowed for greater opportunities for females.

The changes that occurred as a consequence of the demise of the hacienda and the organisation of indigenous people not only made the Cañari visible as a

political actor within the extended milieu of Cañar province, but internal attitudes and beliefs within communities over women's status also began to alter. However, this in itself was a process through which both women and men had to break down the patriarchal values they held concerning women's roles. I am not suggesting that men's consciousness-raising on the hacienda, and agrarian reform, suddenly fixed the subjugated position of women. It was a process that was started at this time that helped lead towards women's empowerment later.

Once independence from the hacienda was achieved, and empowered by what they had accomplished, the Cañari furthered their development, particularly visible through the creation of the UPCCC in the late 1960s. The fact that the UPCCC still functions today serves to highlight that the Cañari have a long-term significance within national politics, especially within the indigenous movement. Equally, the organisational work of the Cañari underscores the overall premise of the indigenous movement in Ecuador, and its collective mission to establish rights for indigenous peoples nationally.

### ***Expanding Opportunities in Education for Cañari Women***

One long-term after-effect of land reform in Cañar has been migration. Despite acquiring land, the indigenous people received poor quality land, meaning that agriculture could not sustain families. Alternative sources of income were necessary to supplement household economies. On the one hand, this meant an increase in the responsibilities of women left behind in communities. On the other hand, however, it created opportunities for women to increase and develop their participation in community activities. Where applicable, others also took advantage of prospects in education.

The fight for access to education by indigenous people as part of the aftermath of agrarian reform in Ecuador, influenced by literacy programmes involving indigenous teachers and CONAIE's demand for recognised indigenous education, infiltrated into Cañar. The creation of Instituto Quilloac was a notable result of men identifying the need for education, but one based on an indigenous curriculum. In turn, their push for the establishment of the Institute increased the chances of women obtaining formal education, leading women to become more recognised as active participants within Cañari society as a result. As demonstrated

in Chapters IV and V, shifts in attitude across generations within families towards indigenous women and girls accessing avenues of education occurred following agrarian reform. Women began accessing literacy programmes as a method of non-formal and adult education, having been denied education during the hacienda period. The value of being able to read and write, besides learning to speak Spanish, became apparent to them. In some cases, those that undertook this process acted as examples for their children. They also became involved in public affairs, a role they had previously been restricted from taking. Further, some became literacy teachers to other women in their communities, expanding the resource they themselves had acquired for the benefit of others (Kabeer, 1999b). Literacy classes in some cases were also combined with income generation activities for women, or developing agricultural subsistence projects. As such, the data presented here concerning literacy and its role in indigenous women's empowerment in Cañar serves to confirm many of the arguments put forward by scholars concerning this subject in Chapter II.

Following the acceptance of women in attaining an education, Chapter V focused on the experiences of young university educated women. Their educational achievements can be said to be an outcome of the national intercultural bilingual education (EIB) curriculum. It was highlighted that Cañar was one of the three provinces in the 2010 census that had the highest illiteracy rate in Ecuador. Thus, increasing levels of indigenous women's professionalization in Cañar in recent years is noteworthy. Given the prevalence of discussions related to formal education as an avenue for female empowerment within the literature (Murphy-Graham, 2012; Pande et al., 2005; Stromquist, 2002), the chapter highlighted a number of factors that appeared important in women's processes towards attaining a university qualification.

While generally it appeared that the majority of women had a level of psychological empowerment and agency prior to university, through which they could make the decision to go, the question is where this empowerment came from. Drawing on the idea that it is within the family and positive relationships with parents as children that can lead to adult well-being later (Aquilino, 1994; Belcher et al., 2011), most women in the data reflected on the role of their parents and the encouragement they gave for their education as influencing their decision to go to university. In a similar vein, familial support during their time at university was also a

key factor in enabling their completion of studies. There has been recognition by academics that kinship networks and cross-generational help in childcare in developing countries support family members in the absence of financial aid or welfare structures. In various narratives in Chapter V, this applied.

Yet, it is surprising that within current discussions concerning empowerment processes via attending university that there is not more emphasis placed on the familial unit from which individuals grow, that can influence the path they take towards becoming educated. Likewise, while Mokomane (2012) and Diener and Biswas-Diener (2005) recognise the link between empowerment and familial relations, what has not been widely acknowledged is how cultural factors can impact on this connection. The data in this thesis, which connects family capital - derived from social capital – with processes of female empowerment, especially in relation to educational attainment, highlights the significance of the family and household within indigenous culture (Orlove and Custred, 1980; Weismantel, 1988). Consequently, an important factor in the process of empowerment for women professionals in Cañar has been the capital found within familial units. Likewise, given the loneliness experienced while studying away from home, and the fact they returned to Cañar after graduation to find employment rather than remain in the city, reinforces the importance family has within these women's lives.

Moreover, in many cases, it was fathers who were the biggest instigators in encouraging their daughters to study, acting as motivators in their choice of university course. In the family case study presented in section 5.1, it was the father who encouraged his daughters as a consequence of his own educational process. The significance of fathers in the lives of women in Cañar is noteworthy as it reinforces the idea that men have been important players within women's empowerment. It also reinforces the fact that attitudes towards women's education have changed, and that men have played an important role in that shift.

Women also referenced their relationships with their mothers as being significant to them, especially in relation to experiencing loneliness while living away from home, or in the absence of fathers due to migration or death. Women recognised that their mothers had been their strength during childhood and adolescence, sometimes acting as examples to them in the face of hardship. This all supports claims made by academics that a strong mother-daughter bond can help

enable processes of empowerment as consequence of increased levels of *power with* and *power within* (Arcana, 1979; O'Reilly, 1998; Shrier et al., 2004; Zapata, 1999a). The data from Cañar in this regard also demonstrates the significance that a mother-daughter bond plays within processes of empowerment for professional indigenous women. Thus, what the data from Cañar indicates is that parents can act as a 'pre-condition' or resource for those accessing formal education and subsequent processes of female empowerment, linking to the concept of family capital (Coleman, 1988). The data from Cañar via the focus on family can also apply to the statement that Pollack made in which the social conditions one experiences, and the extent to which they are empowering, will influence the level of psychological or personal empowerment one has (2000: 77).

Where there was an absence of parental support for education, participants sought it elsewhere, such as within extended family or friends. This in turn reinforces the need for social structures outside of the immediate family. Social capital can be drawn on from within extended social networks. This particular data from Cañar highlights the community ethos of indigenous culture, through which solidarity networks exist, which can be accessed for support. The subject of community and its importance within the lives of indigenous women can also be viewed within the outcomes of Cañari women's university education. This is particularly because the majority of graduates desired to return to Cañar to work in their communities. In various cases women have acted as facilitators for collective empowerment within the community following the acquisition of skills, which in turn can be argued to increase *power within* alongside the *power with*. The existence of a strong community and the internal characteristics of the collectivity provide women with a 'bonding' resource of social capital, through which they can act on behalf of themselves and others towards collective goals (Adler and Kwon, 2002; Bayard de Volo, 2006). The indigenous community presents a social structure that can 'facilitate certain actions of actors' (Coleman, 1988: S98). The Cañari communities appear to be 'endowed with a diverse stock of social networks' which allow people to 'take advantage of new opportunities' (Woolcock and Narayan, 2006: 32). The community acts as the productive force behind women in allowing their 'achievement of certain ends that in its absence would not be possible' (Coleman, 1988: S98). Consequently, the data from Cañar in this regard serves to highlight the

impact of cultural structures on indigenous women's decision-making when connected to what they will do with the skills they have earned at university. Working for the collective benefit appears to take precedent over working for themselves for individual gain. Therefore, when accessing the outcomes of formal education and indigenous women's empowerment, the cultural identity of women is an important factor to consider. While these women's degrees have directly aided them as individuals, providing increased access to employment opportunities, participation in community activities and an overall sense of personal satisfaction, the data shows that obtaining a degree has provided both personal and collective empowerment for those concerned.

The topics of marriage and motherhood that arose as issues within the women's narratives concerning university showed the potential for earning a degree to cause conflicts, particularly on a personal level within the domestic arena. This leads to a question over spheres and levels of empowerment as a consequence of higher education. The data emphasises the fact that, even if a woman becomes 'empowered' via formal education, domesticity can impact on the implementation of that gained empowerment. For example, if there is a need to make motherhood rather than employment a priority, this can lead to the feeling of embarrassment for women in front of others, especially those who have provided economic support. Likewise, discriminatory domestic relations within the home that relegate the educated wife to an undervalued position have the potential to impact on the psychological empowerment obtained from becoming a professional. As Murphy-Graham acknowledged, previous studies concerning education and its influence on women's empowerment in the household 'suggest that women's political and social lives change, yet their intimate relationships remain relatively stagnant' (2012: 130-131). Aspects of the data from Cañar serve to support this point.

### ***Collective Empowerment***

Chapter VI considered the narratives of older women who had become publicly engaged within their communities in an array of different ways. The chapter considered the processes of women and factors that had contributed to their engagement in public arenas, especially as leaders as a form of empowerment. Matters such as education, spousal support, absence of men, and history of



leadership within the family, usually male leadership, had all been contributory factors in them becoming involved in the community; locally and nationally in some cases, and internationally in others. Such factors add to, and confirm, the arguments made by others over the elements believed to be required for indigenous women to become leaders (Cervone, 1998; 2002; O'Connor, 2007). Only two of the participants in this chapter had acquired a higher education. They subsequently followed careers within EIB and as a lawyer respectively, yet were using their skills in leadership roles within their communities. As such, this reinforces the earlier connection made between the acquirement of formal education and its use within women's home villages for collective benefit.

The data here also indicates how elder women within the Cañari community, in contrast to those in Chapter V, have been required to be more creative in their process of becoming actively involved within the public arena without the same opportunities for formal education. This data, therefore, demonstrates that not having a formal education does not limit the ability to undergo processes of empowerment or achieve an empowered position. The case of Mama Willka (section 6.2) and her route to becoming a healer is especially pertinent here, as her experience was based on informal learning from her aunt. Cervone's (1998) study suggested that most indigenous women leaders had gained their leadership qualities as a result of participating in education and childcare scenarios, yet the women in Chapter VI display much more diversity in their trajectories – such as healers, nurses, community presidents, and leaders within indigenous organisations. It can be argued that, in the absence of formal education, accessing popular education programmes such as literacy classes within the liberation theological church, or attending vocational courses at the ERP in Riobamba connected to Proaño, demonstrates how other women born in the pre-agrarian reform era found alternative ways to become educated and 'empowered'. The existence of such programmes was clearly an important factor here, which acted as a resource that women could access. Equally, their stories serve to demonstrate how women at this time found a process that would facilitate their own empowerment in an environment that was still beginning to accept women in public roles. "Women-only" groups were referred to frequently, whereby the participants had accessed, or helped facilitate, consciousness-raising, particularly via the exchange of 'daily lived experience' amongst women (Bosch,

1998; Stromquist, 2002; Walters, 1998). The outcomes of this experience support many of the claims in Chapter II over how non-formal education can be used within women's empowerment.

In cases where the women had helped facilitate such latter environments, it can be argued that they had acted as 'transformational leaders' (Porter and Henderson Daniel, 2008). They appeared to be 'nurturing of others', which is considered a goal of transformational leadership (Shapiro and Leigh, 2008). They did not represent hierarchies of power, but more so focused on working together in order to generate collective empowerment. The power they had acquired through their own personal empowerment was used as a resource for others (*power within* for *power with*) (Astin and Leland, 1991). The women in many cases were acting as facilitators for other women, helping them understand and overcome barriers that were limiting their own public engagement. Through their own experiences and learning, these women understood the structures of power existent within society that had the potential to undermine women's status, role and significance, which they shared with other women in their role as leaders (Zapata, 1999a). This therefore all supports claims made in Chapter II over the personal qualities of women leaders, in addition to the role of facilitators in female empowerment and some of the outcomes that such processes can have for women.

Further, being recognised within the wider community had contributed to the empowerment processes of women in Chapter VI, in which they had either been elected to, or been asked to take up, a political role. This was as a consequence of their skills or focus on working together towards a collective goal. This suggests that others saw them as collaborative, inclusionary, and inspirational (Kark et al., 2003; Porter and Henderson Daniel, 2008). Further, this data reinforces the notion that the community plays a significant part in the empowerment of indigenous women, in turn reflecting the cultural elements of their identities. Nonetheless, the data also highlighted the tensions that some women have encountered within the indigenous movement as leaders, yet the women's response to such situations had indicated *power within* to keep going and not give up on their objective. The Escuela de Formación School that was discussed here indicated a way in which a prominent Cañari woman had found a way to overcome these conflictual issues, within ECUARUNARI. Examining the latter programme also discussed issues pertaining

to the role of popular education in processes of empowerment, confirming that such an avenue for women's empowerment could be achieved via a pedagogical programme outside the formal education system.

Taking all of the above into consideration, it is clear that both the family and community have been influential in facilitating processes and outcomes of empowerment for women in Cañar, reflecting the fact that both these social entities are significant within indigenous culture. The processes occurring across and between individuals, families and communities interconnect with one another. The significance of the family bears fruit as a consequence of the historical importance the community had within Andean life. The community has been maintained throughout the centuries, despite the disenfranchisement that was encountered via the Spanish. The individual plays a part in that social network, yet it appears that the greater whole is more significant. Regardless of how these women have become 'empowered', they return to their communities. The collective benefit as an outcome of their own empowerment is what is most important. If empowerment, as conceived of within the Western world begins with the 'I', it would seem that Cañari women's empowerment begins with the 'we'. Throughout the whole historical process following agrarian reform, the power of the community has been the mainstay for the Cañari. Removing the 'we' in that process would cause the solidarity and reciprocity so prevalent in indigenous culture to be lost. Indigenous culture would lose its identity. Thus, the empowerment of indigenous women has everything to do with indigenous collective empowerment, not just the individual.

This point is reinforced via the data. Certain women, particularly those better educated or who had had more involvement with structures outside of the Cañari village, discussed the word 'empowerment' and how they interpreted it. In Cañar, empowerment was in some cases considered to be an actor that has *power within* in order to be the facilitator for others to achieve empowerment. This therefore reinforces the point that in the Cañari context, empowerment has more to do with *power with* towards *power to* with others. The process through which the 'I' had become empowered in the first place was less important than the use of the *power within* in relation to benefiting the collective whole. This therefore reiterates the importance of community within indigenous contexts and women's lives. On the

other hand, although empowerment was understood by one woman in an academic sense, she did not consider it relevant to herself at all and deemed it a feminist concept that did not exist with an indigenous context. This was despite she herself fitting the Western criteria of an 'empowered' woman. This is significant, as it reinforces the point that those working within the 'I' of empowerment need to understand cultural factors, such as collective rights versus individual rights, when introducing and applying concepts from a different culture into the environment of another. There is a need to understand the social and cultural context of women and how they understand their search for equality and justice. Equally, appearing 'empowered' to one person does not mean you consider yourself 'empowered'. On the other hand, other participants identified empowerment more so with negative authority, and *power over*, contradicting the very nature of the goal of empowerment within a Western setting. Moreover, some did not understand the word at all. What the data from Cañar all points towards is the need for a reconstruction and redefinition of Western empowerment if it is to be applied to a non-Western culture.

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